

# THE SCREAMING SKULLS AND OTHER GHOSTS



BY ELLIOTT O'DONNELL  
A COLLECTION OF TRUE AND  
LEGENDARY GHOST STORIES

THE SCREAMING GHOSTS  
SKULLS and other

ELLIOTT  
O'DONNELL

FOULSHAM

These gripping true ghost tales, together with some compelling legends, are among the most vivid collected by Elliott O'Donnell in more than half a century spent ghost-hunting.

He writes of creeping hands, vengeful phantoms and tortured wraiths exactly as they were seen—from accounts by witnesses, and from records made at the time or shortly afterwards.

Besides documenting the cases of others, O'Donnell has sat many nights' vigils, alone, with well-known personalities. He has investigated numerous cases of supernatural phenomena, disturbing and horrifying, from inexplicable hauntings in lonely country mansions to houses in the heart of towns cursed by appalling events of the past.

No one on reading these tales by Britain's renowned ghost-hunter can remain a sceptic.

Or refrain from a shiver in the dark.

# THE SCREAMING SKULLS

and Other Ghost Stories

*The collected True tales and legends of  
ELLIOTT O'DONNELL, ghost-  
hunter for more than half a century*

*By*  
ELLIOTT O'DONNELL

Arranged by H. Ludlam  
*Author of*  
*"A Biography of Dracula"*

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## INTRODUCTION

Elliott O'Donnell as a boy was afraid of being alone in the dark—horribly and painfully afraid. The ghost stories told him by his sister and the family's sewing-maid made his fear all the stronger. Yet the dark fascinated the parson's son and he longed to explore it though he dared not.

It was not until he had ranched in the Far West of the U.S.A., where he rode cattle, sat at the camp fires and listened to Indians and backwoodsmen talking about eerie lights they had seen on Wizard Island in Crater Lake, and stories of haunted trees no horse would go near, and ghost dances; not until he had freelanced as a writer in San Francisco and New York, trained for the stage in England, acted on tour and in London, and then settled in St. Ives, Cornwall, that he first seriously thought of becoming a ghost-hunter. This was at the turn of the century.

Since then Elliott O'Donnell, who was born in Bristol in 1872, has been novelist and ghost story writer, lecturer and broadcaster, radio playwright and criminologist. But it is in the realm of the supernatural that his most exhaustive work has been done.

He has written more books on ghostly phenomena than anyone. He has investigated countless cases of reputed hauntings, alone and with many notable people including the late Duke of Newcastle, Lord Curzon of Kedleston, Sir C. A. Smith, and Sir Ernest Bennett. He has documented many authentic accounts of supernatural appearances and seen much phenomena himself.

The true stories he now tells, together with some compelling legends, are among the most enthralling gathered in more than half a century of ghost-hunting. Only in some of the true tales, for various reasons, have names of people involved been changed.

H.L.

To  
MR. AND MRS. COOK  
in appreciation of their  
kindness to me

## THE VEILED GHOST OF HIGHGATE

THERE was standing when I was young in the vicinity of Highgate, north London, a quaint, rambling red-brick house with a moss-grown courtyard in front. Inside were large gloomy rooms and dark staircases and passages.

The owner of the house resided abroad. No one lived in it for long and the following traditional story was associated with it.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century there were living in the house a Mr. Bruce, his wife and daughters. Charles, the only son of Mr. Bruce and a wild and reckless youth, had been living in Paris for two years when he suddenly returned home, so ill that he had to be put to bed and Miss Black, a nurse, engaged to attend him.

On her arrival Miss Black was shown into the invalid's room. The furniture was of the handsome, heavy kind characteristic of those times. The panelling on the walls was black with age, the fireplace supported by massive buttresses. The large curtained bed in which Charles lay stood in the centre of the floor, and an oil lamp glimmered on a table.

Miss Black replenished the fire, which was low, and sitting down at the table started to read the Bible. She had been instructed to keep very quiet. Now and again blasts of wind shook the leafless branches of the great trees in the garden, while snow spluttered on the embers as it was wafted down the wide chimney.

Curious to see her patient, Miss Black gently pulled aside the curtain round his bed. Contrary to her expectation he was not asleep but lay motionless on his back, his bright blue eyes glaringly fixed on her face, his underlip fallen, mouth apart, cheeks a perfect hollow, his long white teeth projecting fearfully from the shrunken lips, whilst a bony hand, covered with wiry sinews, was stretched on the bedclothes. He was not a

pleasant sight. Miss Black quickly returned to the table, leaving the curtain still drawn aside.

About midnight the patient began to breathe heavily and seemed to be very restless. Turning to look at him, Miss Black was greatly surprised to see a closely veiled woman seated in a chair near the head of the bed. Miss Black was about to move when the woman motioned to her to keep her seat.

Miss Black could not see the woman's face, owing to the veil, but she got the impression that she was young and good-looking. She was slender and rather tall, and wore a light green dress. She had gold earrings, a large gold locket and chain and a massive gold, bejewelled bracelet of curious workmanship, all of which sparkled in the lamplight. Miss Black concluded that the woman was a relative.

Charles Bruce, who had become more than ever restless, heaved and sighed and seemed in great distress. Miss Black was rising to go to him when the woman again motioned to her to remain seated. The heat from the fire made Miss Black drowsy and she dozed for a few minutes. When she awoke, the woman had gone.

At the same hour the next night the same thing happened. Miss Black was reading at the table when, on looking at the bed, she saw the veiled woman seated beside the patient. She got up and, undeterred by the repellent action of the woman, approached the bed, whereupon the woman rose and moved slowly and noiselessly towards the door.

The face of her patient terrified Miss Black. Deep drops of sweat were on his brow and his lips quivered as if in agony. His glaring eyes followed the receding figure of the woman, who mysteriously vanished just before she reached the door.

The strain she had undergone watching the sick man and the strange woman was so great that Miss Black told the Bruces she could not stay another night in the house. It was only after the doctor implored her to remain that she very reluctantly yielded.

The next night was Christmas Eve. It was bitterly cold but dry. The wind moaned and sighed and rattled the ill-secured

shutters, generating dismal echoes in the gloomy passages of the old building.

At the same hour as on the previous nights the veiled woman suddenly appeared by the bed of the invalid. His gasping and heaving made Miss Black's heart sicken and when, in spite of the warning hand of the strange woman, she approached the bed, the corpse-like features of Charles became horribly convulsed, his eyes starting from their sockets. Miss Black spoke but there was no reply. She touched him very gently. He was cold with terror and unconscious of any object but the mysterious woman.

Thinking her patient was going to expire, Miss Black was about to go for assistance when the woman bent over Charles, who made a feeble effort to keep her away. Miss Black ran at once to the woman, whose clothes were very wet although the weather was dry, and, obeying a sudden impulse, raised her veil. There was no face under it, only a blank.

The shock Miss Black received was so great that she fainted. She was found in the morning lying on the floor only half conscious.

Charles Bruce lay stiff and lifeless, one hand across his eyes as if to shade them from some object he feared to look on; the other hand gripped the coverlet.

That same morning, it was later discovered, the body of a foreign woman, young and beautiful, in a green dress, with gold earrings, a gold locket and chain and a massive bejewelled gold bracelet of curious workmanship was washed ashore on the Kent coast. She had been in the water three or four days. Her identity, if known to certain people in England, was never divulged.

The Bruces left the house soon after the death of Charles and never returned. It was shortly after their departure that the house was rumoured to be haunted by the ghost of a young man, supposedly Charles Bruce, who was seen and heard wandering disconsolately in the dead of night from room to room, along passages and up and down staircases, ever seeking companionship and sympathy, and finding none.

## THE SCREAMING SKULLS OF CALGARTH HALL

IN the vicinity of Lake Windermere there stood in the early seventeenth century a small farm occupied by Kraster Cook and his wife Dorothy. They were a hard-working, thrifty couple, who loved their cottage and their few acres, which had been handed down to them through many generations.

The land all around their holding was owned by Myles Phillipson, the head of a rich and influential family, and who, though not titled, was that type of English country squire who had long met the nobility on terms of equality. Myles Phillipson had an attractive young wife and they planned to build a new manor house upon their estate. Of all the many acres that were theirs, none seemed so desirable to the Phillipsons as the little farm of their humbler neighbours.

But Kraster Cook would not sell. Time after time Phillipson went to him, offering inducement after inducement, but all to no purpose. He could not shake the stubborn farmer's decision.

One day Myles Phillipson returned from the Cooks' cottage with a brow as black as thunder, vowing he would have the land if not by fair means then by foul.

There is a story in the Old Testament of King Ahab, how he coveted the vineyard of his subject Naboth, and how his wife, Queen Jezebel, counselled him wickedly as to how he might secure it. Whether Myles Phillipson's wife had gotten her inspiration from this story cannot, of course, be known, but as wickedly as Jezebel counselled King Ahab, so did Mistress Phillipson counsel her husband.

Next morning Phillipson rode over to the cottage. Smiling, he offered his hand, telling Kraster Cook that he had given up all idea of buying his land and that he had decided to build the new house upon his own acres. He hoped that bygones

would be bygones, and that all the harsh words he had spoken would be forgotten. And further to show his changed spirit, he asked the farmer and his wife to be his guests at the manor house on Christmas Day, which was then a little more than a week away.

The Cooks were relieved and glad that their powerful neighbour had changed his mind about their farm. They hesitated about accepting the invitation, however, for they knew that at the great house the event would be a gay one, and that to it would come the gentry of the county and their wives, all in silks and satins, and furs and flashing jewels. They felt that they would be out of place and uncomfortable—yet Myles Phillipson had asked them, and they did not feel that they should refuse and thus seem to turn aside from the hand of friendship he had offered.

So when Christmas Day came around, Kraster Cook and his wife mingled with the Phillipsons' other guests, looking in their homespun clothes like a pair of timid country mice. Their host and hostess tried to put them at their ease, but when they sat down at the long table for dinner they were bewildered and silent, and during the greater part of the meal they sat stiff and uncomfortable, hardly venturing to glance away from their plates.

Opposite Kraster Cook was a small bowl of pure gold and its glitter attracted his attention; he seemed to find relief from his embarrassment in staring steadily at it. There came a lull in the conversation around the table which was broken by the clear voice of Phillipson's wife saying:

'I see that you greatly admire that bowl, neighbour Cook. Well, it is worth any man's admiration.'

Naturally this attracted the attention of all at the table both to the farmer and the bowl. Cook reddened under the scrutiny and stammered some reply. Other guests commented upon the treasure and the incident ended. Ended for the time—but the fact that Cook had paid unusual attention to the article was fixed in the mind of those present. With dinner over, the farmer and his wife waited about for as long as they

thought was etiquette, then, thanking their host and hostess, they hastened home.

The next day soldiers came to the home of the Cooks. They carried man and wife away to the jail, and there they separated the couple, thrust them into cells, and refused to tell either the reason for their arrest.

A week later the Cooks were taken out of their cells and brought up for trial. It was only when they were in the dock that they found that they were accused of stealing a gold bowl, the property of Mistress Phillipson, their neighbour.

Mistress Phillipson stepped daintily into the witness box and sat and told her story. It was to the effect that the bowl in question had been on her table during the Christmas feast. It had been close to the prisoner, she said, and she was so struck by the manner in which he had insistently gazed upon it that she had spoken to him about it. She narrated the conversation that had taken place, which was confirmed by the testimony of several of those who had been her guests. Two servants then came forward and swore to having seen both the prisoners in the great banquet hall while the other guests were dancing. Finally the bowl itself was produced and two soldiers swore that on searching the cottage of the Cooks they had found it hidden away in one of the bedrooms.

In the face of all this, the amazed and frightened denials of the farmer and his wife were useless. They could do little but shake their heads feebly and stammer incoherently when the judge asked them if they had anything to say.

So, according to the cruel laws of the time, sentence of death by hanging was passed upon them. It was not until the sentence had been delivered that Dorothy Cook found her tongue. Leaning forward with wild, dark eyes, and in a voice that rang through the room, she pointed at Myles Phillipson and his wife and said:

'As there is a just God, you and your wife, Myles Phillipson, have damned yourself forever for our land! Neither you nor your breed will ever prosper. Whatever cause that you support shall lose. Your friendship shall be fatal, and all those that

you and your breed shall love will die in pain and sorrow. You shall have no happiness in old house or new, for my husband and I will be with you night and day. You and all your breed and all your household shall be tormented by us. Never, as long as life lasts, shall you be rid of us!'

The soldiers silenced her and dragged her back to prison. A few days later she and her husband were hanged by the neck until dead.

While the bodies of the two were still swinging in chains at the crossroads, the Phillipsons seized the old farmstead, had the house pulled down and began the building of Calgarth Hall in its place. By the time next Christmas rolled around it was built and they were in it.

Again the gentry and their wives came in their silks and satins, furs and jewels. Merriment ran high, the Cooks and Mistress Dorothy's curse forgotten.

In the midst of the dinner Mistress Phillipson slipped away from the table to go to her room to bring back a jewel she wished to show. There was no gas in those days and the great hall was dimly lighted by sconced candles. The wide stairs were filled with shadows, but Mistress Phillipson, candle in hand, paid no heed to them. She turned a curve. Ice seemed suddenly to run through her veins. She stood frozen with terror.

For there, perched upon the balustrade, so close to her that she could have reached out her hand and touched them, were two grinning skulls. One was a woman's—long, dark hair hung from it. The other was as clearly that of a man. And in the flickering light of the candles the two skulls grinned and seemed about to open their ghastly mouths to speak to her.

Mistress Phillipson shrieked and fled to the dining room where, white and trembling, she poured forth her story to her husband and guests. The whole party, armed with rapiers and candles, followed up the stairs.

The skulls had not vanished. They were just as she had described them—only now instead of being perched on the balustrade they were resting on the top step of the bend.

The boldest of the party approached the objects and thrust at them with his sword. They were no phantoms—they were very real skulls indeed, and the blade clanged against their bones.

'It's a trick—a jest by some scurvy knave!' someone exclaimed. Suspicion fell upon a certain page, and he was taken and tied to a pillar in one of the cellars, and left there in the darkness to force confession. The skulls were ignominiously hurled into the courtyard. In due course the whole household retired.

But it was not the trembling page, imprisoned below, who was guilty—the Phillipsons soon had evidence of that.

It was about two o'clock in the morning that the household was brought out of bed by a succession of high-pitched, agonized screams. Instantly all was confusion at Calgarth Hall. Doors opened, and women with frightened faces peered out and half-dressed men came pouring into the halls. They followed the screaming. It led them to the staircase and there, to their unbounded astonishment and terror, perched again the two grinning skulls.

An instant before the searchers had turned the corner and laid eyes upon the grim objects, the screaming had abruptly ceased. But not one among those who stood there had any doubt that the sounds had emanated from or been caused by the skulls.

There was little sleeping done the rest of the night. The things remained where they were. But in the morning Myles Phillipson himself took them out and threw them into the pond.

Now the curse of Mistress Dorothy Cook was remembered, indeed. Silently the guests left Calgarth Hall, and all that day when Myles Phillipson and his wife looked at each other it was with white faces.

That night they heard from behind tightly-barred doors the weird screams once more echo throughout the manor. And next morning there again were the two skulls perched upon the staircase.

Now began for the guilty pair an intolerable existence. No servants would stay overnight and, indeed, few servants would stay at all. Guests became fewer and fewer, and only the oldest, most courageous friends dared to visit the Phillipsons or to invite them to their own houses, for everyone recalled that part of the curse promising friends sorrow and misfortune. Yet the Phillipsons had courage, too, for they would not abandon the house. They stayed there, defying their implacable visitants.

It was the reality of the skulls that added the most complete touch of horror to the manifestations. If they had been ghostly, mere wraiths, it would not have been so bad. But they were sinisterly real, and back in the mind of each of the Phillipsons was the thought that some night they would awaken to find the grinning teeth at their throats.

In the meantime misfortune followed close behind Myles Phillipson. His business dwindled; every venture into which he went met with loss. At last, shunned by practically all, the two died, leaving little except Calgarth to their son.

When the new heir took over the house the skulls screamed menacingly all that night. But it would seem that with the deaths of the man and woman who had sent the Cooks to the gallows their fury was lessened. At any rate, from the reports that exist, it is indicated that their manifestations took place only on Christmas Day, the anniversary of the fatal dinner, and also upon the anniversary of the day the Cooks were executed.

Apparently, however, there were two other restrictions which they imposed. Any attempt to remove them from the house was sure to be followed by a long period of unrest when the screams rang out night after night. Nor could young Phillipson give any dinners at the nearby Manor House. There is record that he tried this once—but only once.

His guests, so the story runs, were at the table when the screams rang out close to the great doors; then the doors swung open and the skulls rolled in and leaped upon the cloth. The whole company sprang to their feet and fled out into the night.

Sorrow was the constant lot of the heir. When he died he was poorer than his father had been when he passed away. And so it went through the succeeding generations until the Calgarth estate passed out of the hands of the family altogether, and the last Phillipson of the line died literally by the wayside, an outcast and a beggar.

Thus the curse was fulfilled in its entirety.

## THE FIFTH STAIR

ONE morning early in the 1900s Guy Vance, a free-lance journalist, enquired at the office of Baine, Pell & Co., Kensington, if they knew of any small house in the S.W. district of London that was to be let unfurnished at a moderate rental.

'There is one in Ricket Road,' Mr. Pell told him. 'It is a two-storey house, and the rent is only fifty pounds a year.'

'That is certainly moderate,' Vance said. 'Why is the rent so low? Is anything wrong with it—drainage, dampness, cracks in the walls due to settlement?'

Mr. Pell shook his head. 'No, sir, there's nothing wrong with it. The last tenants remained in it for the full term of their seven years' lease.'

'When can I view it?' Vance asked.

'Any time you like,' Mr. Pell replied.

Accompanied by one of the estate agent's clerks, Vance went to number thirteen Ricket Road, Kensington, the next day and liked the house so much that he took it for three years, with the option of remaining in it for another three years at the same rental.

He engaged Mrs. Camp, a middle-aged woman, as his house-keeper, and Emma Larkin, a younger woman, as a general servant. They slept in the house. Jane Bolt, a girl of about twenty years of age, was a daily. The household was completed by Pop, a bull-terrier, and Eve, a grey cat.

It was not until Vance had been in the house several weeks that things began to happen. He was in his sitting-room writing one evening when Pop growled and ran to the door, his hair bristling. Puzzled at the dog's odd behaviour Vance opened the door, and saw a strange woman in black emerge from a cupboard under the stairs, cross the little hall and enter the kitchen. He could only get a side view of the woman, and what he saw of her face startled him, it was so white.

Wondering who she was he went to the kitchen. Only Mrs. Camp was there. She was getting his supper, as it was Emma Larkin's night out. Mrs. Camp stared in astonishment when Vance asked where the strange woman had gone.

'What strange woman?' she queried.

'Why, the one who entered the kitchen just now,' Vance replied.

'You must be dreaming, Mr. Vance,' Mrs. Camp said. 'No one has been here.'

It was Vance's turn to stare at her. 'I most distinctly saw a woman in black with a very white face come out of the staircase cupboard and come in here,' he said.

He told Mrs. Camp about Pop. They were both mystified. But that was only the beginning of the disturbing happenings.

The following day Mrs. Camp, going upstairs, had reached the fifth stair, which was directly above the cupboard, when she was suddenly overcome with the utmost horror. She felt there was something very dreadful underneath her. She was a strong-minded, practical woman, very sceptical regarding the supernatural, but it was only with the greatest effort that she pulled herself together and went on upstairs. She did not say anything about it to Vance, and tried to persuade herself that her spell of horror had been due to imagination.

Pop showed a strong aversion to going up the staircase, and it was noticed that Eve confined herself apparently to the ground floor.

Some days passed, then one morning Emma Larkin ran screaming into the kitchen, sank into a chair and had hysterics. When she had recovered sufficiently she said that when she was going up the staircase to make the beds, something heavy whizzed through the air past her and fell with a thud in the hall. She did not see anything but she felt most acutely that it was very ghastly and horrible.

Mrs. Camp did her best to calm and assure her that it was just her fancy, but Emma declared she could not stay in the house an hour longer, and left.

That evening about nine o'clock Vance was in the sitting-

room reading by the fire. Mrs. Camp was out, and he was alone in the house. Everywhere was still except for the ticking of the clock in the hall and the pattering of heavy raindrops on the window-panes.

Suddenly the hush was broken by a scream, so piercing and full of terror that Vance was appalled. It was followed by a heavy thud. Vance nerved himself to open the door, but nothing was to be seen, nothing to account for the sounds. He shut the door and returned to his seat by the fire, and was glad when Mrs. Camp returned.

He decided that the house was badly haunted, especially the staircase. He had already made a note of the ghostly happenings and now added to this list the cry that he had just heard.

The next day a new general servant, Mary Pring, took the place of Emma Larkin, and for a time all was quiet. Then, one day about a week after Emma had left, Jane Bolt came to Mrs. Camp and said: 'One of the rods on the staircase is out, and every time I try to put it back my fingers go numb—I can't manage it.'

Mrs. Camp went to the staircase. As her instinct had led her to expect, the stubborn rod was on the fifth stair, the very stair on which she had experienced the sudden wave of horror. She tried to put it back but her fingers, too, became numb. Just then Vance, who heard her talking to Jane Bolt, opened the drawing-room door and asked if there was anything the matter. The moment he spoke Mrs. Camp's fingers ceased being numb, and she replaced the rod in its socket without any difficulty.

Again there was a lull of several days, and Vance and Mrs. Camp were hoping that there would be no more disturbing happenings when Mary Pring, looking very pale and scared, came to Mrs. Camp one morning and asked the name of the strange lady in black.

'What strange lady?' Mrs. Camp enquired, not knowing what else to say.

'Why, when I was about to go up the staircase just now,' Mary said, 'I got a bad start. I suddenly saw a rather tall

woman with a very white face and forbidding expression coming down it. She was in a black dress. She passed by me, and when I looked to see where she went, she had vanished. I don't want to see her again.'

Mrs. Camp guessed that the woman who had startled Mary was the mysterious person in black that Vance declared he had seen cross the hall one evening and enter the kitchen. The housekeeper was not at all curious to see that woman.

But she did. One evening about a fortnight after Mary Pring's experience, Vance was talking to Mrs. Camp and Mary in the sitting-room, the door of which was wide open, when he heard someone coming down the staircase. As there was no one in the house except the three of them—the daily had left—they stared at one another, wondering who it could be. They then looked and saw crossing the hall the woman in black.

She was clutching by its long grey hair with one hand a human head that appeared to have been just decapitated. Dangling from its ears were gleaming gold drop-earrings. A weird light surrounded the woman and the head. The woman went to the cupboard under the stairs, turned slowly round, revealing a face that was the incarnation of everything bad, stepped into the cupboard and abruptly vanished.

The shock of what they had witnessed had been so great that it took Vance and the two women some moments before they could even partially recover. Mrs. Camp was the first to compose herself. Both she and Mary declared their inability to remain in the house any longer, and left the next day. Vance, not caring to stay in the house alone lest he should see the woman with the head again, or something even worse, put up at an hotel until he could find another house.

Before he left the neighbourhood he made many enquiries, and eventually learned that about sixty years before he went to number thirteen Ricket Road a dreadful murder had been committed there. A woman named Kate Murphy had murdered her mistress, Miss Delia Brown, an elderly spinster, in a manner too awful to describe, and after dismembering her

body on the flat roof of the house had distributed her remains in various parts of the district. Miss Brown's head was the only part of her body that was never found.

The owner of thirteen Ricket Road, after listening to Vance's account of the ghostly occurrences that he had experienced there, had the floor of the staircase cupboard excavated. Under it was a skull with long, matted grey hair. The doctor who examined it was of the opinion that it had been there for many years; so that although there was no actual clue regarding its identity, it seemed not unlikely that it was the missing head of poor murdered Miss Delia Brown.

## THE FATAL PHANTOM OF ERINGLE TRUAGH

ONE of the most interesting cases of hauntings in the annals of ghost-lore is that of the old churchyard of Eringle Truagh, in County Monaghan, Ireland. According to a traditional story many centuries old the churchyard was haunted during the whole time people were buried there by a spirit fatally attractive to young men and girls. It only appeared in the churchyard after the funeral of a native of Eringle Truagh.

To girls it assumed the form of a very handsome young man, and to young men that of a very beautiful golden-haired maiden comparable with the Elle Maids of Scandinavia and the Lorelei of the Rhine. The manner in which the phantom contacted its victims was this:

A young man who had been present at the burial of someone very dear to him, in spite of the priest's warning lingered in the churchyard alone after everyone else had left. He was bewailing the death of the dear one when he suddenly saw approaching him a provocatively lovely girl. Her face full of sympathy, she bade him mourn no more for the loved one he had lost and assured him that she was far happier now than she would have been had she lived. Comforted by the girl's words the youth entered into conversation with her. They sat close beside one another on the low wall of the churchyard and the young man became more and more enthralled by her wondrous beauty. Never in his life had he beheld either in actuality, or in dreams, anyone so beautiful. So enchanted was he that he never thought of questioning her identity or whence she came.

He made desperate love to her. She reciprocated his sentiment, and bade him promise to meet her in the churchyard four weeks from that day and seal his promise with a kiss.

This he did. Directly their lips met in a kiss she vanished; and then, and not till then, did he recollect the traditional

story of the haunting of the churchyard and realize that she whom he had embraced so fervently was the much dreaded phantom.

Overcome with horror he rushed home and implored his relatives and the parish priest to save him. But prayers proved to be of no avail. The shock he had sustained resulted in a fatal illness, and in exactly four weeks he was, on the very date he had pledged to meet the phantom, brought to the churchyard in his coffin.

The phantom did not invariably appear in the churchyard, there are instances of it being present at dances and weddings, where it never failed to secure a victim. The fatal kiss and promise were always given, and the final meeting with the phantom was always in the churchyard on the pledged day.

William Carleton, the Irish novelist (1798 to 1869), was so intrigued by the traditional haunting of the old churchyard that he visited the place. Writing about it afterwards he said: 'I have been shown the grave of a young person about eighteen years of age, who was said about four months before to have fallen a victim to the phantom, and it is not more than ten weeks since a man in the same parish declared that he gave a promise and fatal kiss to the ghost and consequently looked upon himself as lost. He took a fever and was buried on the day appointed for the meeting, which was exactly a month from the time of his contact with the spirit.'

'Incredulous as it may seem the friends of these two persons declared, at least those of the young man did, to myself that particulars of the meetings with the phantom were detailed repeatedly by the two persons without the slightest variation. There are several other cases of the same kind mentioned, but the two alluded to are the only ones that came within my personal knowledge.'

I was so interested in the haunting that in 1926 I wrote to the postmaster of Monaghan about it and asked if he could tell me where I could get photographs of the old churchyard. In his reply he mentioned Carleton's ballad and said the church of Eringle Truagh had been dismantled many years

#### THE SCREAMING SKULLS

previously and only two ivy-covered gables remained of it. But, he said, belief in the story of the Phantom of Death still lingered.

I later obtained several photographs of the old churchyard in which are to be seen the graves of the alleged victims of the much dreaded phantom.

#### THE GREY HORROR

IN the summer of 1894, when on my way out West in the U.S.A., I stayed for a week at an hotel in Denver. There I met William Smith, an elderly minister who was well versed in the traditional ghost stories and legends of some of the American States. One evening when we were alone he told me about the dreadful grey ghost that had formerly haunted Grenburg Valley, on the eastern shore of the River Hudson. This is his story.

One afternoon in the seventies of the last century two young men, Herbert Hall and Walter Wren, arrived at a little village near the eastern shore of the Hudson, the inhabitants of which were mostly of Dutch extraction. After they had had a meal at the village inn they asked the landlord to tell them the way to Grenburg, a small port on the Hudson where they intended to stay the night.

'There are two ways,' the landlord said, 'the one a good deal longer than the other but preferable when it is getting dusk.'

'What difference does that make?' Wren asked. 'Is the road very rough?'

'It is very rutty and rocky in places,' the landlord said, 'but that is not what I had in mind.'

'What did you have in mind?' Hall queried, eyeing him keenly.

The landlord hesitated. 'There is a valley a mile from Grenburg which has a bad reputation.'

'Robbers?'

The landlord shook his head.

'What then?' Wren asked impatiently.

'Well,' the landlord said, 'the folk around here say it is haunted.'

The young men burst out laughing.

'You don't mean to say you believe in ghosts!' Hall said.

'I have long wanted to see a ghost. What is the story associated with the valley? I'll be bound there is one—a murder?'

The landlord shrugged. 'There are all sorts of stories but you would only ridicule them.' He proceeded to give them directions as to both ways of getting to Grenburg.

Thanking him and declaring their intention of bearding the lion, or rather ghost, in its den, they selected the road through the valley, and with their knapsacks once again strapped to their backs they set off at a brisk pace.

At last the travellers reached the summit of a hill and, deep down beneath them, they saw, spread out for some considerable distance, a thickly wooded valley, all dark and mysterious in the uncertain twilight. As they descended into it they became aware of the funereal-like silence that greeted them on all sides.

The dale was in fact so deeply situated that even the wind, which for the last half hour or so had been blowing with great force along the surface of the hill, was scarcely to be felt there. Occasionally a fitful blast could be heard among the lofty trees, when the pale Fall leaves gave out a curious husky crackling. Otherwise all was absolutely, wonderfully still.

The two men were so impressed that neither spoke until they had arrived at the bottom of the decline, and were standing in almost Stygian darkness amidst the shadows of the foliage on either side of them. Hall was the first to break the silence.

'This must be the haunted glen,' he said. 'Pretty cheerful, isn't it?'

'It is that,' Wren replied, looking around him trying to pierce the gloom, 'but come on. I vote we get out of it as soon as possible.'

Further on they came to a wide open spot where there were crossroads. Here the shadows lay very thick—so thick, indeed, that they had to curb their pace and proceed very slowly lest they should take the wrong route.

It was while they were thus engaged, straining their eyes and peeping around them apprehensively, that they became impressed with the certainty of some object moving slowly

ahead of them through the gloom. At such an hour, for it was now getting late, and in such a dreary place, this was calculated to challenge attention, and Wren and Hall found themselves gazing at the object with an intensity that had in it something not very far removed from fear. By and by they were able to see it a little more clearly, and they perceived it was a very tall figure, apparently a man walking at an even pace, but with immensely long strides.

He was going in the same direction as they were and was only a few feet in front of them, but to their astonishment they found that although they accelerated their pace with the idea of overtaking him, they did not approach the least degree nearer; without seeming to increase his speed, he yet maintained invariably the same distance away from them.

They had now struck off along a road they believed to be the right one and were walking tolerably fast. The figure preceding them, however, was seemingly in no way aware of their proximity, for without once turning its head towards them, with the same measured stride, it steadily advanced. At length Hall, more perhaps to relieve his feelings than anything else, called out:

'Hullo there! Who are you?'

There was no response. The figure did not show by any gesture the slightest consciousness that it had heard, but continued pacing on at the same rate and at the same distance. The two friends now suddenly realized that their sense of hearing, which the strangely emphasized silence of the place had rendered abnormally acute, had not caught any sound of footsteps coming from the figure. They could readily decipher the echoes of their own, but the figure seemingly trod with absolute noiselessness.

This came as an unpleasant surprise, and soon they became poignantly aware of the advent of novel and distinctly uncomfortable feelings. Pride prevented them admitting this and they were striving to rally their faculties and, at all events, to simulate unconcern, when the unexpected happened. The figure abruptly swerved off the road and, making for a large

wooden gate leading on to a gravel drive, came directly into the moonlight.

Both Wren and Hall at once emitted an involuntary cry. Instead of being clothed, the figure was nude! It gleamed a horrible, sinister grey. It had very long arms and legs and a peculiarly small and rotund head, and when it suddenly turned and looked at the two travellers it revealed a strange and startling countenance.

The features were more or less human, but the expression in the big, deep sunken, light-green eyes was not. So frightful was it, so indescribably exultant and devilish, that Wren and Hall shrank back appalled, too petrified with fear to utter a sound.

Fortunately, however, the figure showed no inclination to dally. Moving onward, still with the same peculiar lengthy and measured stride, it advanced up the drive, eventually disappearing from view round a rather abrupt curve. A few seconds later there was a faint sound in the direction it had taken, resembling a human cry, and a moment or so later, still from the same direction, there was a repetition of the noise, but much more prolonged and bearing with it a tone of suffering quite beyond the ability of words to describe.

There was another pause, and then, apparently nearer, a yell of the most piercing intensity, the animal element in it seeming to strive for mastery with the human; and its final echoes had scarcely died away before the whole valley became alive with appalling sounds, with moanings, plaintive and yet horribly menacing, and with whoopings, interspersed with harsh, discordant cries and queer, hollow-sounding, long-reverberating laughter.

This went on for about a minute. It then quite suddenly ceased and was followed by a silence unbroken save for the gentle rustling of the fast-dying foliage and the melancholy sighing and soughing of the night breeze.

Wren and Hall waited for a few minutes, until they could sufficiently pull themselves together, and then continued their

tramp, eventually reaching their destination without further mishap.

*(William Smith stopped here and said that was enough for one night. The following night he went on with his story).*

An Irishman named Patrick O'Rourke, hearing about the ghostly experience of Hall and Wren, went to the village inn where the two men had stopped on their way to Grenburg and prevailed upon the landlord to tell him anything he knew about the grey ghost and haunted valley. And this was what the landlord said:

'Four years ago last April I was going through the valley in the early hours of the morning. The dawn had only just broken and the track in places was still dark. Well, when I was pretty nearly opposite the large wooden gate leading into the White Grange, as we call it, my horse (I was riding a brown cob that I had not had in my possession very long) suddenly shied, and I saw sitting by the wayside, up against the trunk of an elm, a tall figure. In the uncertain light I thought it was a man, some tramp who was either having a nap or was ill. I called out to him and, as he did not reply, I called again and was considering dismounting to see what was the matter with him, when he suddenly and with amazing agility sprang to his feet. I then got a fearful shock.

'It was no man at all, but a grim and ghastly caricature of one!

'It was gigantic, ten or twelve feet in height it seemed. It was nude, its skin being seemingly a glistening, uniform grey, and its face like that of a death's head; a death's head, however, with something frightfully lurid and evil in its big, round eye-sockets. I had not time to observe more because my horse bolted, but when I eventually reined it in and looked around I saw the thing, whatever it was, cross the road with enormous bounds and disappear through the gateway leading to the White Grange.'

Here the old man paused for a moment, then, clearing his throat, he went on again:

'There were two travellers that the great grey ghost actually touched—or at least, one of them. They were walking through the woods when they heard footsteps behind them. They turned and saw following them a great grey shape, whose unearthly long arms trailed along the ground. It was of unearthly height, too. Its head seemed to tower up into the trees, and that head was a grinning skull.'

'The men began to run, but the thing covered at one stride ten times the ground they could. Closer and closer it came—the gigantic grey shape that pursued the fleeing travellers. And suddenly a soft, incredibly repugnant something like a cloudy hand half turned to flesh covered like a mask the face of one of them.'

'He shrieked once and fell. The other, crying with horror, ran on. The thing did not pursue him. Next morning a searching party from the village sought the other traveller. They found him wandering in the woods half insane. He never quite recovered his mind.'

Here the old man paused again.

'And there is no accounting for the haunting?' O'Rourke asked.

'There are theories,' the old man said.

O'Rourke then enquired of him the name of the present owner of the White Grange, and having obtained it he went on his way. A week later and he was back again in the same neighbourhood. In the interval he had written to the owner of the property and, somewhat to the owner's astonishment, had obtained leave to stay a night there.

The night chosen for the expedition proved to be exceptionally wild and stormy. O'Rourke had invited three friends of his living in the county to go with him to the Grange. He had chosen them because they were very stolid, matter-of-fact athletes, not in the least degree likely to give way to nerves.

Having first assured themselves no one was hiding anywhere in the house, they looked for a spot to commence their vigil and finally selected the room O'Rourke believed, from the description given to him, was the haunted chamber. It was

situated at one end of the corridor and possessed two doors, the one leading into the corridor and the other into what in earlier days was styled a powder closet. It was an oddly constructed apartment, for across the middle of it were two pillars, and on the wall between them hung a grotesque looking piece of tapestry.

The four friends sat on the floor in a row right across the room, O'Rourke facing the corridor, Moor and Ross facing the tapestry, and Ventry facing the entrance to the powder closet. At first, every now and then, they fancied they heard soft footsteps tip-toeing up and down the corridor—once they seemed actually to be in the room—but after a time these sounds all died away and there was nothing but silence, unbroken save for the occasional rattling of doors and windows and the beating of rain against the panes of glass.

One by one the quartet fell asleep to be awakened by hearing the church clock sonorously boom out three. Moor at once rose to his feet.

'Look here,' he said, 'it's morning. Nothing will happen now and I have to be at—' Then he suddenly changed his tone and with a wild cry of 'Oh, my God, there it is!' he staggered back against the wall.

The other three looked and in the dim light of dawn that struggled to get in through the crevices of the shutters, they saw, standing erect between the pillars, a luminous something. Nothing more at first. By and by, however, while all were gazing at it in open-mouthed wonder and excitement, it suddenly became hideously and alarmingly vivid, and they saw an immense form, streaked, so it seemed to them, a lurid black and grey.

Moor and Ross glanced at its face, and they said afterwards it was like the face of a corpse, only a corpse that was nearly in the skeleton stage, the skin being drawn tightly over the bones, and the mouth devoid of flesh and grinning. The impression it gave them was that it was intensely hostile. O'Rourke and Ventry contented themselves with peering at the body only, they did not dare raise their eyes to the head.

They stared at it for some moments, until in fact it began to approach them, when Moor gave way to panic and shrieked out: 'Strike a light, one of you!'

O'Rourke then lit a candle, and the thing at once vanished. The four men did not stay to talk the matter over. They made for the corridor immediately and hurriedly left the house.

A week or so later came a kind of sequel. O'Rourke was again in the neighbourhood. Indeed, the spot so fascinated him that he paid a flying visit to it. When he was in the valley looking around him, a stranger suddenly came in sight and accosted him. He said that on the very night O'Rourke and his friends were in the big house looking for the ghost he had seen it.

'It crossed from there,' he said, pointing to a tall isolated tree on one side of the road, close to a pit with a wide, dark, gaping mouth. 'Watch that pit closely tomorrow night between twelve and three o'clock. It is the pit that causes the White Grange and the valley to be haunted. It goes right down into the bowels of the earth. There are holes like it in Peru and Brazil. They attract and harbour a foul and dangerous species of elemental spirits.'

Precisely at the time he mentioned O'Rourke went to the haunted valley. The night was fine, but dark scurrying clouds suggested the possibility of rain. The pit made his flesh creep. There was something so eerie and menacing about it.

He approached it cautiously and was gazing at it apprehensively when he got a terrific start. Rising out of its reputed fathomless depths was a luminous ghastly grey head. The only live thing about it was a lurid, baleful light in the depths of its fleshless eye-sockets. It was the same horrible phantom that O'Rourke and his friends had seen in the White Grange.

O'Rourke stared at it aghast, and when grisly shoulders gradually appeared he did not wait to see any more, but took to his heels.

He was quite satisfied that what the stranger had told him about the pit was true. He never went to the valley again.

Some years later the supposed fathomless pit was filled in, and when that was done Grenburg Valley ceased to be haunted.

Thus ended the strange story that William Smith so kindly told me in Denver City more than seventy years ago.

## THE GHOST OF FRED ARCHER

IN the early summer of 1927 a considerable sensation was caused in Newmarket by a report of the appearance of a ghost in the Hamilton Stud Lane. Two local people, a mother and daughter, declared that they saw a phantom horseman emerge from a copse, gallop noiselessly towards them and when near, mysteriously vanish.

The older woman had a vivid recollection of Fred Archer at the time he was a familiar personality in Newmarket, and she was certain the apparition she had seen was he. The horse of the phantom rider was grey, and that had been the colour of Archer's favourite steed. There had long been a rumour in Newmarket that the Stud Lane was from time to time haunted by Archer's ghost.

Fred Archer, the second son of William Archer, a well-known jockey, was born at Cheltenham in 1857. Between 1870 and 1884 he won more than 2,000 races and achieved world-wide fame. His was a household name. Archer suffered a terrible blow by the death of his wife, to whom he was devoted, in 1884, within a year of their marriage. For a time he abandoned riding. The attraction that it had for him proving too great he again appeared on the racecourse and was as successful as ever.

In 1886, worried about his increase in weight, he tried to reduce by taking less food. He would sometimes hardly eat anything for three or four days, his only diet being a few water biscuits and a small glass of champagne. Never very robust, this treatment told on him, and when he had an attack of typhoid fever he had little strength to cope with it. During the absence of his nurse from the sick room one day he shot himself. He was only twenty-nine years old.

Archer was buried in the cemetery at Newmarket in the same grave as his beloved wife.

On June 3rd, 1927, at the request of the northern newspaper for which I was working at the time, I went to Newmarket with the express purpose of spending a night in the Hamilton Stud Lane on the chance of seeing the alleged ghost. I visited Archer's grave and made numerous enquiries relative to the haunting. On the heath I entered into conversation with an old man seated on the ground beside a wheelbarrow.

'Have I ever seen or heard anything about Archer's ghost?' he said in answer to my interrogation. 'Well, yes, I have often seen what I thought might be his ghost when I was a youngster. On one such occasion I had been to Six Miles Bottom, and was returning home along the road leading past the Green Man and what is known about here as The Two Captains. It was between one and two o'clock in the morning, the moon was high overhead, no one was about, and all was so still that you could catch the slightest sound.'

'Well, I had just passed the junction of the London and Cambridge roads, and had almost got to the cleft in the Devil's Ditch, through which the main road runs, when all of a sudden I saw on the white roadway alongside me what resembled the black shadow of a horse and rider. Wondering where the material counterpart of the shadow could be, I at once looked around but there was nothing to be seen, only bare space on either side of me, nothing, I thought, that could in any way account for the shadow. Yet it was still there, and it continued to move along by my side for some little way, when it suddenly vanished.'

'The rider, judging by the shadow, seemed to be of a fair height and to be wearing a kind of hat, which might have been what we used to call a deer-stalker or it might have been a jockey's cap; at any rate it seemed to have a sort of peak. My impression was that it was Fred Archer's ghost, which I had been told was sometimes to be seen on the heath, but when I spoke about it to an old friend of my father, a man who had lived in these parts close on eighty years, he said that it was

far more likely it was the ghost of one of the highwaymen that used to rob and murder people on the heath.

'I still believed, however, that what I had seen was the ghost of poor Archer. But there, it might have been just my fancy.'

I made my way back to town, and later returned with the intention of spending some time in Hamilton Stud Lane. Passing once again by the cemetery I turned down a seemingly interminable straight road, flanked on either side by neatly trimmed hedgerows, having in their background fields and, here and there, solitary trees. On at last reaching the end of this stretch I came to a slight dip with a building on either side of it, and just beyond, three buildings and gates, also on either side of the road a collection of trees forming a kind of miniature spinney.

Feeling somewhat tired after what was to me an unusual amount of walking I looked around for somewhere to rest, and at last spotted a suitable spot up against the hedgerows and under the shadow of the trees. Making for myself as comfortable a seat as the nature of the ground allowed I sat down and began reading a little book on Cambridgeshire that I had bought in the Charing Cross Road the previous day.

The waning daylight, however, soon put a stop to my reading. I dozed, and awaking with a start got up and was stretching myself when I suddenly became conscious of a sensation of eeriness. A moment or two later I sensed something large flash past me. The spot became so uncanny that I left it.

I was trudging along the road with no particular goal in view when I encountered a cyclist, and asked him if he could tell me whereabouts in the lane it was that Archer's ghost was alleged to have been seen.

'Why, yes,' he said, with a smile, 'in this lane.' And he thereupon described to me the spot where I had had the eerie sensation.

Without realizing it, I had been in the haunted Hamilton Stud Lane. I returned to the spot, and after being there for some time I again experienced the odd sensation and heard sounds like those made by a horse rapidly approach me. I saw

nothing. When the sounds were close to me they stopped abruptly, receded and gradually died away in the distance.

Nothing further happened. Whether what I experienced was due to poor Fred Archer's ghost I cannot definitely say. As to why his spirit should have haunted the lane and neighbourhood, that must be left entirely to speculation. None of us is sufficiently acquainted with the laws and ways of the unknown to decree. We can only surmise.

## THE HAUNTING OF THE GORY HOTEL

I WAS having a discussion one day in my London club with Sir Roland Melville, Bart., about ghostly phenomena, and he told me the following experience which he had had some years previously.

He was travelling one day from Paddington to Penzance in an express. On the way the train was held up when the line was blocked through the collapse of a bridge, and he was obliged to seek a room for the night in Plymouth. After much hunting he at last found one in an hotel not far from the Hoe.

The room was a back one on the first floor. It smelt fusty. The bed was in the middle of the floor and on one side of it was a large cupboard. There was a gas fire in the room and Sir Roland sat by it to warm himself, for it was a very cold night. Tired with his journey and made drowsy by the heat of the fire he went to bed and dozed fitfully, being awakened by a laugh, loud and mocking. He sat up indignantly and saw an eerie spherical light on the door of the cupboard.

As he stared wonderingly at the door it began to open very slowly. Little by little the aperture increased and an object appeared. It was a luminous head, the head of a negro. The mouth was bared in a ferocious grin, and the dark glittering eyes suffused with diabolical hatred.

The aperture kept widening until a whole body appeared. In one hand it held a carving knife. Stealing stealthily out of the cupboard the negro, crouching down, crept towards the bed. Petrified, Sir Roland watched him as he drew nearer and nearer. After what seemed to him years, the negro reached the bed and, bending over it, raised the knife. As it was about to descend the spell which had chained Sir Roland ended and, tumbling out of bed, he made for the door. He stayed on the landing till he could not stand the cold any longer.

Ashamed of his fear he then went back into the room. It was in darkness. There was no sign of the phantom negro. He slept till morning.

The line not being quite cleared Sir Roland had to spend another night in the hotel. As on the previous night he sat for a time by the fire in his room, and then got into bed. He fell asleep, and woke with a start to feel a cold, clammy, bare body lying by his side.

He sat up and made to spring out of bed but found he could not. He was again limb and tongue tied, and again an eerie light appeared on the cupboard. As before the phantom negro emerged from the cupboard and crept to the bed. His eyes, glowing with malicious joy, were fixed not on Sir Roland but on the man by his side, as he raised his gleaming knife. The chain which had held Sir Roland spellbound broke as before, and springing out of bed he got to the landing. This time he did not return to his bedroom but sat in the coffee room till morning.

He angrily related his experiences to the landlord of the hotel, who was full of apologies for putting him in the room, which he admitted was haunted. According to the tale he told Sir Roland, about a hundred years previously the hotel had been a private house owned by Mr. Jasper Stevens, a widower, who had made a fortune in the West Indies. His only companion in the house was his negro servant Tom, whom he had brought from Jamaica. Tempted by the money Mr. Stevens foolishly kept in the house, Tom murdered him, and disappeared. The police failed to trace him.

Sir Roland suggested that the cupboard out of which the negro ghost emerged should be examined. This was done. At the back of it was a spring which, being opened, revealed a secret chamber. Crouching on the floor of the chamber, a bloodstained knife by his side, and a heap of gold coins in front of him, was the skeleton. Apparently the negro, discovering the spring, had got into the cupboard but been unable to get out of it, so starving to death.

Hence the haunting by his ghost. Efforts to exorcise it proved futile, and the haunting continued until the hotel was demolished—a year after Sir Roland Melville stayed in it.

## THE LONDON VILLA OF GHOSTLY DREAD

IN a by-road not far from the old Crystal Palace there was standing prior to 1914 a small villa known locally as the Mystery House. It was often to be let, as no one ever stayed there for long.

After it had stood empty for a considerable time, a family named Trent took it. Mrs. Trent thought there was something strange about the house almost the moment that she crossed the threshold. However, nothing unpleasant happened till they had been in it a fortnight.

On entering her bedroom in haste one morning Mrs. Trent drew up sharply on seeing the bedstead shake and one of the pillows move. Wondering if some pet animal was in the bed she went to it and very cautiously raised the pillow. There was nothing under it. She removed the bedclothes, but there was nothing under them. She peered under the bed; there was nothing there.

Mystified but thinking it was probably just her imagination, or maybe some kind of an illusion or hallucination, she thought no more of it.

The following night Mr. Trent was awakened by a spine-chilling scream coming from his wife's room, which was next to his. In a terrible fright he jumped out of bed and dashed to her.

In the moonlight, which flooded the room, he saw his wife trying to push away a pillow which was over her face. Something seemed to be pressing it down. He seized the pillow and found himself struggling with an invisible thing that smelt horribly. The struggle seemed to him to last interminably but more likely it was only for a few seconds. To his relief, whatever it was desisted, and the pillow fell on to the floor.

His wife had been too exhausted to help him, and it was not until she had fully recovered that she was able to talk.

She said that all she knew was when she awoke from a nasty dream, the pillow had been removed from under her head and was over her face, and she felt that someone was trying to smother her.

Mr. Trent persuaded her to change rooms with him. She did, and nothing further took place for a week. Mr. Trent was then alone in the house, his wife, children and the maid having gone for the afternoon to Hampstead.

Fancying he heard a noise in the basement he went down to inspect the place but found nothing to account for it. Having satisfied himself that the doors and windows were all securely fastened he was mounting the kitchen staircase when he heard footsteps following him. He looked round but there was no one there.

Thinking it must have been his imagination he went on again, but he had not mounted more than a couple more steps when he again heard the footfalls behind him. He abruptly swung round, and for a moment the sight of his own shadow, which stood out very black on the cream coloured wall beneath him, made his heart beat with unusual fierceness, but there was still no one to be seen. He stamped his feet and mounted a couple more steps, but everything was quite still, and he had gained the hall and was halfway up the flight of stairs leading to the first landing when the same mysterious footfalls were again audible.

In spite of his scepticism for ghosts and the like he now felt a ghastly fear stealing fast upon him, and with these uncomfortable sensations he continued his ascent. There was no repetition of the steps now until he had arrived on the top landing, when they came running up behind him, very fast, as if someone was making frantic efforts to overtake him.

This time it was with an effort he turned round, but as on the former occasions, there was no one to be seen. The unaccountable nature of the occurrence filled him with vague and almost horrible sensations, and yielding to the excitement he felt gaining control over him he leaned over the banisters and shouted sternly, 'Who is there?'

The sound of his own voice, thus exerted in the utter solitude of the house, and followed by the most death-like silence, had in it something so unpleasantly thrilling that he now experienced a degree of nervousness which he had never felt before.

A week later and the place was once more to let. Then an ex-actress of the name of Cattling took it. She arrived with a whole retinue of dogs—poms and dachshunds. The first week of her tenancy passed uneventfully enough. The dogs were very restless at night, growling and whining and keeping very close to one another, but she attributed that to their being in new surroundings and never for one moment gave it serious heed.

Then one evening one of the poms suddenly cried out as if it had been hurt. She ran upstairs to her bedroom where she had left it, and found it lying on the floor. At first she thought it was asleep, but on examining it more closely she discovered it was dead.

She was puzzling this over when something attracted her attention to the bed, and to her surprise she saw one of the pillows was standing on end. She approached it, and then came to a sudden halt. The pillow had assumed the most extraordinary and wholly unaccountable shape. It was like a face, the face of some very bizarre animal with a monstrously long nose and two deep-set eyes that gleamed horribly, and with apparent devilish merriment.

It so fascinated her that for some minutes she simply stood staring at it, and then, yielding to a sudden paroxysm of fury, she rushed at it, and catching hold of it, straightened it out and flung it on the ground.

'You killed the dog,' she shrieked, 'and want to harm me. You won't! You won't!'

There now followed a fairly long spell of comparative quiet. Then one night the unexpected happened. Mrs. Cattling, as per habit, went for a walk accompanied by her pets, and did not return home till late. The house was in pitch darkness and she was in the hall, groping about for matches for the gas,

when a box was quietly slipped into her outstretched hand. As might be expected she was terribly taken back, and for some seconds she stood stock still, not knowing what to think or do.

If it was a burglar, she tried to argue, why had he not struck her? And yet, if it was not a burglar, who could it possibly be? The suspense at length became so unbearable that, resolving to learn the worst and see whatever it was face to face, she struck a light, and then very cautiously peered around.

There was no one, nothing to be seen. Mystified, she now went upstairs to bed, and having locked and barricaded the door after her, she speedily undressed and crept in between the sheets.

She slept till morning, and was in the act of dressing and laughing at her fears during the night, when close to her elbow she heard a long protracted sigh. She immediately turned round, but there was no one there, nothing to account for it.

A week or so after this she had some friends round to spend the evening with her. They played cards and were in the middle of an exciting hand of bridge when one of them, who was merely a spectator, uttered a loud exclamation and pointed to the wall.

'Look at that picture,' she said. 'What is making it behave like that?'

They all glanced in the direction she indicated and were greatly astonished at seeing an old coloured engraving in a frame swaying violently to and fro, without any apparent cause.

They all sat quite still and strained their ears, but there was absolute silence, not the remotest sound of any kind, either from within or without. One of them then went to the window which, though open at the top, was closed at the bottom, and peered out.

'The night seems very calm and still,' she said. 'It would take a good deal of wind to make that picture move.'

Then, suddenly it was still, and absolutely motionless, like all the other pictures in the room, and everyone present felt a curious sensation of relief. Nothing of further moment

occurred during the rest of Mrs. Cattling's short tenancy, and after she had left the premises they stood empty for another long period.

It was during this interlude that an adventure in connection with the house is said to have befallen two people living in the neighbourhood. They were a young man and girl, sweethearts, who, strolling out together one evening, chanced to pass the 'mystery house'.

'Strange that house never lets, isn't it?' the young man remarked as they paused in front of it and gazed up at the windows. 'I wonder what's wrong with it.'

'Why, they do say as how it's haunted,' the girl replied, 'but ghosts is all nonsense, ain't they, Reg?'

'I reckon so,' Reg laughed. Then, fired with a sudden inspiration, 'I say, supposing we sit for a while in the back garden. It will be nice and quiet there.'

From the garden the couple commanded a complete view of the back of the house, and they were commenting on the appearance of it, how peculiarly neglected and deserted it looked, when they simultaneously gave vent to a deep 'Oh!' Exactly opposite them on the first floor was a window, and up to the present it had been bathed in gloom.

Now, however, quite suddenly it became illuminated with a dull, glimmering light of an unhealthy bluish colour which appeared to originate from within the building.

They fled precipitately and on future occasions took very good care to give the 'mystery house' a distinctly wide berth.

The next recorded happenings at the house occurred quite late in its life. A Mrs. Eveley took it for six months, and her household consisted of herself, grown-up daughter Barbara, and two servants, Matilda and Phyllis. The disturbances began the very first night of their tenancy. Going to bed somewhat early, as she was very tired, Barbara awoke with a violent start to see in the white moonlight a very tall form in black bending over her, and the next moment the bedclothes were snatched violently off her. The bed was then shaken vigorously to and fro.

This went on for some seconds when at last, to her infinite relief, the figure left the bedside, and she heard the door give a loud slam.

Barbara's terror was so great that for some minutes she dared not stir. As soon, however, as her faculties had somewhat recovered from the shock, she sprang out of bed and rushed into her mother's room. Mrs. Eveley was a very strong-minded woman, not in the least degree afraid of burglars, and rousing the servants she bade them search the house with her.

They did so, going into every room and examining the cellar and cupboards, but they found no one, and could discover nothing which would explain in any way the remarkable occurrence.

About a week later the whole household was aroused in the middle of the night by the sound of hammering, coming apparently from the basement of the house. As the servants refused point blank to accompany Mrs. Eveley downstairs to see what it was, she lit her candle and went alone.

When she arrived in the basement she found the kitchen door wide open, while on the table, in the centre of the floor, she saw what appeared to be an enormous black coffin. The shock at encountering such a ghastly spectacle was so terrific that she at once fainted.

Hearing her fall Barbara and the maids hastened to her assistance, and on reaching the basement all three saw the shadowy outlines of something they could only describe as infinitely alarming and grotesque come out of the kitchen, run past them and ascend the staircase with gigantic bounds. This came as the climax, and within a week the house once again stood empty.

The house had been standing empty for some long time when the landlord, happening to visit it one day, fancied he could detect a smell of gas. He sent for a plumber, and prior to the man's arrival waited in one of the rooms. After a while, hearing, as he thought, a noise on the top landing he ran upstairs to ascertain the cause of it, and not discovering anything to account for it came down again, and was surprised to find

the plumber had arrived and was already engaged at his job.

'How on earth did you get in?' he said to the man. 'I made sure I had shut all the doors.' The man made no reply, however, and the landlord, concluding he must be deaf, watched him in silence for some minutes, and then hearing a knock at the front door went to see who was there.

Rather to his astonishment it was another plumber.

'Why, how is this?' he said. 'One of your men is already here. Surely there is no need for two.'

'It can't be one of our men, sir,' the plumber responded, 'for I am the only man available. He must have come from somewhere else.'

'You are from Smith's, are you not?' the landlord asked.

'Yes, sir,' was the reply.

'Well, the other man must have come from them too,' the landlord answered, 'for that is the only firm I sent to. You had better come inside and see.'

Bidding the man follow him he went to the room where he had left the workman, but there was no sign of him. Remark-  
ing that it was very odd he called out, but there was no res-  
ponse. He then searched the premises, but there were no traces  
of the workman anywhere. And when Smith's man examined  
the gas pipes he quickly found the leakage. There were no  
evidences whatever of any attempt having been made at a  
repair.

The landlord, of course, knew the reputation the 'mystery  
house' had acquired, and he could only conclude that what  
he had witnessed was another of its already long list of ghosts.

The original owner of the house, who had committed  
suicide, had been a man of very bad reputation, and it was  
thought that the hauntings might either be due to his earth-  
bound evil spirit, or to something that occurred on the site of  
the house before it was built.

### AN UNSOLVED MYSTERY

Not far from St. Shepherd's Grove, Dublin, there is an isolated house dating back to the days of Dutch William. For years it stood empty, no one caring to stay in it for long, and Mrs. Valentine, the owner, was despairing of letting it when Colonel Ward took it furnished for a year.

His wife and children moved in shortly before Christmas, he being unable to join them as yet. The first few days passed uneventfully. It was not until Mrs. Ward had been there a week that anything disturbing happened.

She was in the sitting-room reading when there was a rap on the door; it sounded as if it was made with bare knuckles. Wondering who it could possibly be as the servants had gone out, Mrs. Ward went to the door. Confronting her was an old woman in a mob-cap and old-fashioned dress. She was very ugly. Raising a skinny hand she shook it menacingly at Mrs. Ward, leered, and turning sharply round she ran across the hall and up the stairs, remarkably nimble for one of her age.

Considerably startled Mrs. Ward tried to persuade herself that the old woman was a friend of the maids. She resumed her seat by the fire, and had barely sat down, when, much to her relief the maids returned.

The next day Colonel Ward came. That night he sat up late. It was close on one o'clock when, candle in hand—there was no gas in the house—he went into the hall. The fluctuating light from the candle was not enough to dissipate the gloom. Fancying he heard a noise he turned, and found himself face to face with the old hag his wife had seen. An odd light enveloped her and illumined her pale eyes, which glowed maliciously as they met the Colonel's startled gaze.

'Who are you?' he stammered.

She did not reply but, leering at him, she ran across the hall and ascended the staircase. When near a bend she paused

and, looking down, shook her fist. Then, turning, she vanished quickly out of sight.

At breakfast that morning Colonel Ward said, 'My dear, I have seen your old woman. I do not wonder that you were scared. I was too. She is not pretty.'

In the afternoon Jack Deane, Mrs. Ward's brother, who had just left Sandhurst and was waiting for a commission, came to spend Christmas with them.

He was in the boot-room when he saw a woman standing in the doorway.

'Here, mother,' he exclaimed, 'take this boot to be cleaned.'

Picking up one of his boots he threw it across, and to his surprise it passed right through her. Thinking that it must be his fancy, he threw the other boot, and the same thing happened. He rubbed his eyes to make sure he was not dreaming. The woman was still there, and for the first time he saw her face illuminated in the gloom. It was that of a very ugly old woman.

He took a step towards her, and she disappeared.

Much concerned now Deane sought his sister and told her that he must have been working too hard, and, as a result, was having hallucinations.

'It was no hallucination,' Mrs. Ward said. 'What you saw was a ghost. Paul (her husband) and I have both seen the old woman.'

The three of them, Colonel and Mrs. Ward and Jack Deane were standing in the hall talking that evening, when they heard the clinking of glass and rattling of china. The sounds came from the dining-room where the table was loaded with glass and china ready for the party they were having the next day, Christmas Eve.

They at once went to the room. The moment they opened the door there was a tremendous crash, and all the glass and china fell upon the floor.

Lying on the floor was the bleeding body of a boy of about twelve years of age. Bending over him, a look of fiendish glee on her beautiful face, was a young woman dressed in a costume

of a bygone age, her white arms and breast gleaming with gold and jewels.

By the side of her crouched the old hag, who leered at the intruders, an expression of devilish malice on her puckered up face. A weird light enveloped the three figures.

As the appalled intruders stared at the scene before them the room darkened, and there was an eerie silence.

The Wards left the house the next day.

## THE HAUNTED BUOY

PAGET HICKMAN was one of my father's old friends. Like my father and myself he was greatly interested in the supernatural.

He was at a resort in Kent one summer when he had an extraordinary experience. He was on the beach on very hot day, and was looking for a resting spot when he saw an old buoy high and dry ashore. He went to it, sat down, and rested his back against it.

Overcome with the heat and tired with walking about, he presently dozed. How long he was in that state he did not know. When he came out of it he found himself standing in front of a garden gate on which was a nameplate: Dr. Horace Crawley. He opened the gate, walked up the path, and knocked at the door. A young and very attractive woman opened it.

'Oh, I am so glad that you have come, Ralph,' she exclaimed. 'You are very prompt. He is dead.'

Hickman found himself smiling, and said, 'When did he die?'

'Two or three minutes before I rang you,' the woman replied. 'I want you with me when the doctor comes.'

She took him to a back room on the first floor, where a grey-haired man, who looked many years older than the woman was in bed. Hickman was looking at the man when the woman backed out of the room, turned the key, and locked him in.

'You are cooked,' she cried, 'really caught! You poisoned him with that drug you got in Brazil. There is some of it in your clothes in your wardrobe. I put it there. Now for the police.'

It was all so sudden that for some moments Hickman stood as one stunned; then, realizing his danger, he tiptoed softly to the window and looked out of it. It was a deep drop to the back garden below. Raising the window with as little noise as

possible, he swung over the sill, and, trusting to luck, dropped.

The woman cried, 'Eustace, Eustace, he's getting away—stop him!' A tall, strongly-built man rushed out of the back of the house and gave chase to Hickman, who, shaken by his fall, had only just picked himself up. He at once fled.

The tall man, shouting 'Murderer!' pursued him. Round to the front of the house Hickman spurted—he had been a fast sprinter at school—and made for the sea front.

A party of picnickers were in a field. Hearing the tall dark man crying 'Murderer! Stop him!' they joined in the chase. Panting and nearly worn out Hickman got to the beach. Several men who were there tried to stop him, but dodging them he got to the buoy, scrambled into it and tugged at the lid that was open. It came down and closed with a click.

He heard his pursuers shouting, banging on the buoy and trying to lift the cover, but they could not. It was automatically locked. He chuckled. By and by the air felt close and he perspired. There was no ventilation. Which was the worst, to be hanged for murder or suffocated? The air grew closer and closer. There was a tight feeling in his chest. He gasped and tried to swallow. His throat was dry—parched.

Hickman suffered from claustrophobia—always had a great dread of being confined in a narrow space. He was now. He beat the sides of the buoy. He would rather be hanged than endure more of what he was undergoing.

He cursed Mrs. Crawley, cursed the day that he was born, even cursed the Creator. His tongue seemed on fire. To quench his awful thirst he licked the sweat on his hands and body. It felt as if his eyes were protruded yet they saw nothing. A stopping in one of his teeth seemed molten.

Then suddenly something was happening—there was motion. Dimly his senses grasped it. Slowly, very slowly he was being borne to the sea. A churning and rolling about produced nausea. He was on the seas. He lost consciousness.

When Hickman came to he was lying on the baking hot beach with his back against the buoy. It took him some time to realize that his dreadful experience was but a dream. He

made enquiries about the buoy, and learned that it was well known to be haunted, and that there was a probable explanation of the haunting.

It was this:—

Several years before Julian Harper, a married businessman in the resort, had been one of Mrs. Crawley's clandestine lovers. He was rung up one day by her and asked to come quickly as her husband was very ill. He went, and had in actuality experienced all that Hickman had undergone in the dream—the accusation of poisoning, the escape from the house, the pursuit, the getting into the buoy and the awful suffering when in it. But, fortunately for Harper, a workman who had been repairing the buoy had left his wallet in it, which brought him back to the beach. The workman found Harper unconscious, overcome by the lack of air.

No action was taken against Harper; apparently Mrs. Crawley and her accomplice afterwards had no desire to substantiate their accusation.

### THE MAN IN BOILING LEAD

IN Liddesdale, about five miles off the highway from Carlisle to Jedburgh, stands the ruin of Hermitage Castle, traditionally reputed to be one of the worst haunted castles in Scotland. It is situated in a valley amid green hills with Hermitage Water, a lovely babbling stream, coursing along over a rocky bed at the foot of it.

The oldest part of the castle, grey and hoary with age, was probably built by Nicholas de Soulis in the thirteenth century. It functioned as one of the great, immensely strong fortresses on the Scottish border. It was added to in or about the fifteenth century. After the ownership of it by the family of de Soulis, the castle passed into the hands of the Douglasses, and afterwards became the property of the Earls of Bothwell.

It was to Hermitage Castle that Mary Queen of Scots rode one day from Jedburgh to visit Bothwell, who had been wounded in a fight with a robber.

The eerie reputation earned by the castle is largely due to William de Soulis, who was regarded by the local inhabitants as a sorcerer, and believed to practise black magic in a castle dungeon. With his followers, who were as cruel and savage as himself, he pillaged and ravaged not only Liddesdale but territories far beyond it.

No one resented Soulis' conduct and detested him more heartily than the young chieftain of Keilder, a land on the other side of the Scottish border, who for his great strength and agility, was popularly known as the Cout (colt). The two had always been sworn enemies. Great therefore was the Cout's astonishment one day when a messenger bearing an olive branch, as an emblem of peace, came to Keilder with an invitation to a banquet at Hermitage.

In spite of the entreaties of his beautiful young wife not to accept the invitation, and a warning by the Brown Man of the

Moor, a local seer and prophet, the Cout, fearless of danger, went to Hermitage Castle accompanied by a score of his friends and retainers.

Soulis greeted him cordially with many professions of regret that they should ever have been on bad terms. The fare was sumptuous, the wine, probably obtained in a marauding expedition, excellent.

During the meal Soulis cunningly contrived to cast a black magic spell over the Cout's followers; the Cout, who was immune from it owing to a charm given him by the Brown Man of the Moor, sprang up from the table, knocked down the men who tried to seize him and sped out of the castle. He was pursued by Soulis and a troop of armed men.

In trying to leap over Hermitage Water the Cout fell into a deep pool and was held down in it till he was drowned. The pool is still called the Cout's Linn, and in the castle grounds is a gigantic grave alleged to be that of the murdered Cout.

The foul murder of the Cout and the continued depredations by Soulis at last roused all Liddesdale and the surrounding lands against him. A petition was presented to the King asking his permission to destroy Soulis. The King, tired of hearing constant complaints about Soulis said, 'Oh, boil him if you please, but let me hear no more of him.'

He was taken at his word. The enemies of Soulis attacked Hermitage Castle, overcame its defenders and seized Soulis. As he was being led away to his doom, he managed to throw the key of the black magic dungeon to his familiar spirit 'Redcap', with the injunction to keep the dungeon ever afterwards locked.

He was taken to the Nine-Stane Rig, a Druidical circle, and thrust head-first into a cauldron of boiling lead.

'In a circle of stones they placed the pot  
On a circle of stones but barely nine  
They heated it red and fiery hot  
Till the burnished brass did glimmer and shine.  
They rolled him up in a sheet of lead

A sheet of lead for a funeral pall  
They plunged him in the cauldron red  
And melted him lead and bones and all.  
At the Skelf-Hill the cauldron still  
The men of Liddesdale can show  
And on the spot where they boiled the pot  
The spreat (water rush) and the deep-hair  
(coarse pointed grass) ne'er shall grow.'

The cauldron is said to have been preserved for very many years at Skelf-Hill, a hamlet between Hawick and Hermitage.

The King, soon after the petitioners left him, fearful lest they should take what he said to them literally, tried to stop them before they got to Hermitage but was too late.

'Redcap' did as Soulis bade him and kept the door of the black magic dungeon locked. Ever afterwards it was haunted by the earthbound ghost of Soulis and the evil spirits he had evoked. People passing by the castle at night testified to hearing blood-curdling yells and demoniacal laughter.

Nor was that the only haunted dungeon in the grim old castle. In 1324 Sir William Douglas, the then owner of Hermitage, becoming jealous of his friend, the gallant and popular Sir Alexander Ramsay, who had been appointed Sheriff of Teviotdale, a post that he, Sir William, had long coveted, treacherously seized Ramsay and starved him to death in a dungeon; for several days the wretched captive existed on grains of corn that dribbled down from a granary overhead.

For years after Ramsay's death heart-rending cries and groans could be heard at night coming from the dungeon in which he had been confined.

## THE CREEPING HAND OF MAIDA VALE

A SOMEWHAT impecunious family named Newman, attracted by the remarkably low rental of a house in Maida Vale, London, took it on a three-year lease. They moved into it in December, and for the first few months of their tenancy nothing occurred to suggest even remotely that the house was haunted.

Then, in March, shortly after the advent of Maisie Newman, a buxom girl of about twenty years of age, to take up her abode once more with her parents, things began to happen.

Coming home one afternoon Maisie went into a room in the basement to take off her boots, and, while there, suddenly saw an old woman wearing an old-fashioned black gown, a white cap, the somewhat crumpled border of which fitted closely to her head, and a white handkerchief pinned across her bosom, standing in the doorway looking at her.

Thinking it was either a new servant or a daily, Maisie called out casually: 'Here, Mary, or Jane, or whoever you are, take these boots like a dear and dry them for me.'

They were very high 'lace-ups' and Maisie tossed them carelessly, one after the other, at the old woman. To her unmitigated surprise and horror, the boots went right through the aged dame, who, turning slowly round, disappeared in the gloom of the narrow stone pavement outside.

As soon as she could pull herself together Maisie ran upstairs, and, meeting her mother in the hall, was explaining to her what had happened when she suddenly stopped short, pointed excitedly at the staircase and exclaimed, 'There she is—that is the woman!'

Looking in the direction Maisie indicated, Mrs. Newman saw to her astonishment the figure Maisie had just described in the act of ascending the stairs.

Remembering a test for hallucination that had been ex-

plained to her a short time before by a medical man, Mrs. Newman now quickly determined to try it. Pressing one eye, so as to throw it out of parallel focus with the other, she stared hard at the figure, which immediately appeared double.

Convinced now that what she saw was objective, for had it been merely the result of hallucination it would have undergone no change from the test applied to it, Mrs. Newman at once proceeded to follow the figure upstairs.

Moving absolutely noiselessly, it had gone about halfway up the second flight when it abruptly vanished, and Mrs. Newman and Maisie found themselves staring into empty space.

This was the Newmans' first experience with the unknown. The second occurred a few days later. Mr. Newman, who never finished in the City very early, and who had, as a rule, much correspondence to attend to when he got home, was in the habit of sitting up late, and on the night in question it was close on twelve before he put down his pen and rose to go to bed.

Switching the light off and gently closing the study door, for everyone else had long since retired, he crossed the hall on tiptoe and began to ascend the stairs. The intense and unusual (so he thought) silence of the house struck him forcibly. The window on the landing overlooking the garden in the rear of the house was open, and the tapping of the ivy against the glass sounded so strangely loud that Mr. Newman was for a moment quite startled. He could almost have fancied it was someone outside rapping. And then a draught of cold air rustling past him set the shabby, weather-worn front door rattling on its hinges, and the rattling was so pronounced that it really seemed as if someone was turning the handle and trying to gain admittance.

Step by step Mr. Newman mounted the stairs. He had arrived on the middle step of the second flight leading to the first floor, when he suddenly felt himself collide with something that was apparently obstructing his way.

Wondering whether he was asleep or awake, he rubbed his eyes vigorously, and again attempted to ascend. The same thing happened. He came right up against some invisible object, and this time he drew back with a violent shudder.

He was still standing on the edge of the stair, shivering and not knowing what to do, when something cold and clammy seemed to fasten round his throat, and in another instant he began to choke.

He tried to free himself, but though he could distinctly feel the thing round his neck throttling him, he could grasp nothing with his fingers. He threw out his arms and beat the air wildly, he stamped on the ground and kicked, but it was of no avail. He could feel or touch nothing, and all the while the sensation of being strangled intensified more and more.

At last, just as he was on the verge of losing consciousness, and the buzzing in his ears had developed into thunderclaps, a door from somewhere overhead opened and a voice that might have come from several houses away, it seemed so remote, called: 'Father, Father—whatever is the matter?'

In a moment Mr. Newman experienced a great sensation of relief. The thing, whatever it was, relaxed its hold and he was able once again to breathe freely.

Up to that time he had not felt as much actual fear as repugnance. There had been something in the touch that had repelled and shocked him, but now that it was gone reaction set in, and Maisie, for it was she who had called out, found him standing on the stair, looking ghastly white and trembling.

The next experience of the haunting concerned the Newmans' tortoiseshell cat, which soon showed she was just as much in possession of the psychic sense as any dog or human.

To begin with, although Julie, as the cat was called, was decidedly fond of wandering about the upper part of the house during the daytime, nothing would induce her to remain there after dark. The moment it began to grow dusk, she was invariably seen hurrying downstairs to the ground floor or kitchen, and no amount of coaxing would persuade her to go upstairs again till the following morning. Also, for no apparent

reason, she would sometimes in the evening exhibit signs of panic, and if the door of the room she was in happened to be shut, she would claw it frantically in her efforts to get out.

One day, early in April, Mr. Newman's married daughter, Violet, accompanied by her only child, Delia, came on a visit to the house. Like most children, Delia was very fond of playing with animals, and she soon struck up a friendship with Julie.

One evening, shortly after tea, her mother, hearing a commotion in the breakfast room, where she had left Delia playing with Julie, ran to see what was the matter. To her relief, Delia was all right, and on being asked what all the noise was about, replied, 'Why, Julie has behaved so badly, I didn't know she was such a naughty, jealous old thing. While I was playing with her a few minutes ago, another animal came into the room and wanted to join in.'

'Another animal!' Delia's mother exclaimed in great astonishment. 'What animal?'

'Well, I don't exactly know what it was, Mummy,' Delia replied, 'for somehow I couldn't see it very plainly. It seemed to be all misty, but it wasn't a cat or a dog, for it had long, funny ears and moved about ever so fast. I tried to touch it, but it wouldn't let me, and it jumped about so I couldn't get very near it. Julie gave up playing with me the moment it appeared, and she kept scratching at the door so hard that I let her out, for I was afraid Granny would be angry. Just look at what the naughty thing did,' and Delia pointed at the marks of Julie's claws on the door.

'I see,' her mother said, shaking her head severely, 'but tell me, Delia, what happened to the animal you talk about? Where is it now?'

'In that cupboard!' Delia cried, pointing to a small cupboard near the fireplace. 'It ran in there when I was chasing it; that is what all the noise was about, and as soon as I had it nice and safe inside I shut the door and bolted it.' The child clapped her hands gleefully.

'And it is there still?' her mother asked anxiously.

'Oh, yes,' Delia laughed. 'It couldn't possibly get out. See!' and, tiptoeing gently to the cupboard, she shot back the bolt and threw open the door.

There was nothing whatever inside.

The last experience the Newman family had with the unknown in this house occurred a night or two later. The married daughter, Violet, slept with Maisie in a room on the first floor. On this particular night they both retired to bed somewhat earlier than usual; Maisie fell asleep almost as soon as her head touched the pillow, while Violet lay propped up with pillows reading. At length, growing weary, she fell asleep too, but soon afterwards awoke suddenly and completely, with a vivid sense of some extra unlooked-for presence in the room.

She sat up hastily and looked at the candle. She had left it burning, and very little of it remained. Feeling extraordinarily awake she took up her book and recommenced reading. By and by, however, the feeling that this extra unlooked-for presence was still in the room, close to her, grew so strong that she put down her book and glanced cautiously around. There was nothing and no one to be seen, saving Maisie, who lay sleeping peacefully by her side, and Delia, who was in a small bed beside them, also fast asleep.

But still Violet was not satisfied: she felt unquestionably that there was an additional something or someone in the room with them. Peering round her furtively, for the extraordinary stillness in the atmosphere generated fear, a fear to which she had hitherto been a total stranger, she suddenly received a shock.

On the wall facing her, about midway between the floor and the ceiling, was a strange and sinister-looking shadow. It was the shadow of a hand with fingers stretched out, as if in the act of clutching something. Violet moved her own hands at once, but that made no difference—the shadow still remained there. Then she shifted the pillow and various other objects around her, but the shadow still retained both its shape and position. Seized with a horrible fascination, she now sat bolt upright and stared at the hand.

It did not seem, somehow, to be a man's hand; it was scarcely large enough. It was more like the hand of a coarsely-made woman. The fingers were long, with bony protruding knuckles and very square tips. There were no rings on any of them, and the top of the little finger was missing.

It was not merely an ugly hand; it was hideous and repellent, and Violet, as she sat staring at it, felt just the same feeling of loathing well up within her as she would have felt had she been staring at some venomous and repulsive insect.

And now to her horror the shadow suddenly began to move. Rising slowly, it crept stealthily up the wall, till it eventually reached the ceiling. There for a moment or two it paused, and then with a furtive, spider-like movement it cautiously advanced over the ceiling, nearer and nearer to the bed, till it finally halted exactly over Maisie's head.

A terrible fear now seized Violet. She tried to cry out, to utter any sound, but she could not. She was tongue-tied and helpless, and in this condition she was compelled to witness all that followed. She saw the shadow slowly leave the ceiling and descend the wall, always with the same horrible insect-like movements, till it came to about on a level with Maisie's head.

Then, quite suddenly, it vanished, and immediately afterwards Maisie moved, while an expression of fear, speedily followed by one of loathing, which in its turn was supplanted by one of pain, convulsed her features.

Violet, still unable to move a hand or foot or utter a sound, was now compelled to watch her sister undergoing physical as well as mental torture, for she appeared to be labouring for breath, precisely as if she was being very gradually but surely throttled.

When she awoke she told Violet that she had just had the most horrible dream. She had dreamed that someone had tried desperately hard to strangle her, and so realistic had it all been that she could still feel the fingers pressing with hideous ferocity on her windpipe.

Violet then told Maisie about the hand, and for the rest of

the night the two sisters lay awake, talking, with candles burning by the bedside.

In the morning they told their parents what had occurred, and insisted on them leaving the house at once.

Mr. Newman now thought it high time to make enquiries, and as, on doing so, he learned that the house had long borne a reputation for being haunted, he straightway interviewed the landlord, the interview resulting in his being let off the remainder of the lease on payment of what amounted to little more than a nominal sum.

Mr. Newman made enquiries about the house but learned nothing more than that it had been rumoured to be haunted for a long time, and that some very queer people were said to have once lived there.

## THE MAN ON THE LANDING

A VERY strange case of complex hauntings occurred, and I believe even yet occurs, in a fine old country mansion, once the home of the Rickard family, near Weymouth.

It is a queer, rambling building, full of winding oak staircases and long narrow corridors. Some of its windows look down on a gloomy courtyard and others on the even more gloomy burial ground of a very ancient church. Viewed in the daytime, even, the atmosphere of the place impresses one with a sense of loneliness, and this sense deepens as the day progresses.

After sunset, when the shadows from the great elms and firs clustering around the house darken its walls and windows, the effect is ghostly in the extreme, and it would be a matter of positive surprise to a believer in the superphysical if the place did not contain a ghost.

Actually it is said to contain at least two. One of them appeared some years ago to a Mrs. Walters, who was on a visit to the then tenants of the house.

Towards dusk one afternoon Mrs. Walters left her children in the nursery to dress for dinner, and on the landing outside met her daughter-in-law, also a visitor.

While they were standing talking Mrs. Walters suddenly heard footsteps, and on looking down the staircase whence they came she saw a tall man with iron-grey hair in the act of ascending.

Struck with his appearance, for there was something strange about him, she watched him mount to the top of the stairs and then cross the landing some few yards from where they stood. Advancing towards a door leading into what was at one time an oratory, but which had for some years past served as a kind of a box-room, he opened it very stealthily, and, entering, closed it gently to.

Convinced now that he was a thief, Mrs. Walters at once ran to the door and flung it open. To her amazement, however, no one was there.

Around her lay a pile of trunks and miscellaneous pieces of furniture, but of the grey-haired man there was no trace.

Mrs. Walters at once told her daughter-in-law what had happened and asked if she could in any way account for it. To add to her mystification, however, her daughter-in-law denied ever having seen the grey-haired man and tried to persuade her it was sheer imagination.

They were still discussing the matter when their hostess, attracted by their voices, which were raised somewhat high, appeared on the scene, and, on hearing Mrs. Walters' story, at once exclaimed, 'Why, that was the ghost!'

She then went on to explain that the house was haunted by the ghost of an old man, popularly believed to have been murdered in it centuries ago, in a manner too horrible to describe.

On another occasion Sir C. T.—, the tenant of the house, entertained two judges who were on their way to the assizes at Dorchester.

During the meal one of the judges was very talkative and cheerful, while the other hardly said a word but sat wrapped in gloomy abstraction. Afterwards, when they were driving together to Weymouth railway station, to catch the train for Dorchester, the gloomy judge suddenly observed to the cheerful one, 'I say, do you know why I was so silent at dinner?'

'No,' said his friend. 'Why?'

'You will laugh at me, I dare say, when I tell you,' replied the other. 'It was because I saw, standing behind our hostess's chair, all the time we were at the table, a figure that was the exact counterpart of herself.'

'Nonsense,' laughed the cheerful judge.

'It's as true as I'm sitting here,' the gloomy judge said, 'and you may depend upon it, we shall hear bad news of her before long!'

What he said proved only too true, for within an hour after

they had left Sir C. T.'s, Lady T. retired to her own apartment and hanged herself.

Still another haunting. One summer evening some years ago two girls were standing at one of the windows of the old house, drinking in the sweet-scented air and admiring the effects of the soft white moonbeams on the beautiful old ivy-covered church, that stood only a little distance from them.

The night was very still—scarcely a whisper of the wind, nor a rustle of leaves; and in the fields that lay alongside the church the cattle were standing dumb and motionless. Indeed, the only sign of life and movement were the bats that whirled in noiseless flight in and out of the trees and bushes on the lawn.

The girls, who had been silent for some minutes, were about to interchange remarks, when suddenly a bell began to toll.

'Good heavens,' one of them exclaimed, 'why that's the Passing Bell! Who can be dead?'

'Does it never ring excepting on the occasion of a death?' said the other.

'Why, no,' her companion replied, 'and I have never heard it so late at night as this before.'

There was something in the sounds that fascinated them, and they stood listening till the bell at length ceased and silence once again reigned. Then they went to bed.

In the morning one of them—the daughter of the then tenant of the house—received a telegram saying that her grandfather, who lived in the country, but at some distance along the coast, had died suddenly, at the very time she and her friend both heard the Passing Bell.

Much puzzled to know why it had rung, however, for it seemed hardly likely that the news of his death could have travelled so quickly, she went to the church and inquired of the sexton.

'The Passing Bell?' he exclaimed, looking at her in amazement. 'And of this church? Miss, you're mistaken. No one died in this village last night and no bell rang.'

'Oh, but it did,' the girl insisted, 'for I and my friend both heard it. Someone must have got into the belfry.'

'Impossible,' the sexton said emphatically, 'for the key of it has never been out of my possession; no, not for an instant.'

Greatly mystified, the girl then inquired of the vicar, and with the same result. No one had died in the village, he informed her, and no bell had tolled. And there the matter ended, to this day a puzzle.

## THE LEGEND OF COOKE'S FOLLY

ABOUT the year 1673 there was living in a large mansion close to the Durdham Downs, Bristol, a merchant named John Cooke, who had made a vast fortune trading overseas. He was one of the city sheriffs, and greatly esteemed on account of his wealth. The day came when there was much rejoicing owing to his wife having given birth to a son. To celebrate the event a grand banquet was given in the Cookes' house.

Many rich Bristolians were invited, including Mr. Griffith, the mayor, Mr. John Hicks, a former mayor, and other local celebrities. No money was spared to make the occasion a great and memorable success. There was music and dancing, games and amusements of all kinds.

One incident alone marred the pleasure of the day. It occurred during the banquet. In the midst of the general gaiety a gipsy astrologer, who was known locally as the Wizard of the West, suddenly entered the dining hall. Full of wrath at not having been invited to the banquet he stalked through the long lines of tables and, halting by the host, with a dreadful scowl on his face, solemnly spoke these lines:

'Twenty times shall Avon's tide  
In chains of glistening ice be tied  
Twenty times the Woods of Leigh  
Shall wave their branches merrily  
In Spring burst forth in mantle gay,  
And dance in summer's scorching ray.  
Twenty times shall Autumn's frown  
Wither all the green to brown.  
And still the child of yesterday  
Shall laugh the happy hours away.  
That period past, another sun  
Shall not his annual circle run

Before a silent, secret foe.  
Shall strike the boy a deadly blow.  
Such and sure his fate shall be;  
Seek not to change his destiny.\*

The guests listened to this harangue in amazement. They did not know what to make of it.

The awful malevolence in the gipsy's eyes as they glared at the host sent a cold chill down Cooke's spine. He sat appalled till the gipsy had finished speaking and then in tremulous tones begged him to relent and offered him gold if he would not predict anything so fearful for his son.

Rejecting his offer with scorn and repeating the last two lines of his oration, the gipsy marched out of the banqueting hall.

His departure was as mysterious as his advent. No one saw him enter the grounds, no one saw him leave, or knew what subsequently became of him. Mr. Cooke was very superstitious, he lived in an age when credulity in witches, ghosts and necromancers was universal. He believed fully in what the gipsy had said. Nor did the passing years diminish his fear of the fulfilment of the gipsy's prediction.

The greatest care was taken of the young Cooke who became a fine, handsome youth. One day when he was in a street in Bristol, he chanced to see a beautiful girl looking out of a window. Their glances met and it was a case of love at first sight with both of them. He obtained an introduction to her, and after he had seen her several times, he told his father that he wished to marry her.

His father wanted him to marry someone else, not considering the girl his son loved good enough for him. She was a tradesman's daughter. They had many heated arguments but in the end John Cooke gave way, and his son became engaged to the girl he loved. John Cooke would not, however, consent to his marriage until he was twenty-one.

When that time was drawing near, John Cooke, fearful lest

\* 'Wild Oats' by Albert Smith.

the predicted secret foe should get within striking distance of his son, had a tower built on his ground and made it as safe as possible against any undesirable intruder. In this tower, provided with every comfort, John Cooke insisted on his son remaining till his twenty-first birthday was past. The eve of that day found the Cookes in a fever of anxiety. The most careful watch was kept in the grounds lest anyone should try to enter them without permission.

The weather being very cold, the imprisoned youth was provided daily with faggots for a fire. He let down a rope from his windows, and the basket was attached to it. This was done as usual on that particular eve. John Cooke and his wife gave sighs of relief as they saw their beloved son draw the basket of faggots up to his window and take them into the room.

Only a few more hours and the limited time of the prediction would be passed. And as yet no sign of the secret foe. Midnight came, still no sign, and the Cooke parents retired to rest rejoicing. The much dreaded enemy had failed to put in an appearance.

Early in the morning John Cooke went to the tower and gleefully shouted to his son to come down from his bedroom and open the front door. There was no reply. Again and again he shouted, and still no reply.

A ladder was procured, and a servant climbed it and got into the bedroom.

John Cooke's son was dead, bitten on the right arm by an adder that had been in the basket of faggots. So the gipsy's prediction had been fulfilled after all. The adder was the secret foe.

John Cooke did not long survive his son. After his death the tower he built was ever known as Cooke's Folly.

## THE MAUTHE DOOG

To those who are under the impression that ghosts invariably appear in the form of some human being, it may come as a surprise to learn that there are quite a number of well authenticated cases of hauntings by the ghosts of domestic and wild animals. One of the most widely known hauntings by an animal ghost is that of Peel Castle, in the Isle of Man.

Peel Castle is one of the most beautiful and picturesque ruins in Great Britain. The animal ghost that has haunted it intermittently for many centuries is called the Mauthe Doog. According to Waldron, a famous authority on the Isle of Man, the Mauthe Doog used to confine its visitations to two parts of the castle, which was then garrisoned by soldiers and sometimes inhabited by the Lord of the Isle himself, namely, the guard-room and a subterranean passage connecting the guard-room with the ancient Cathedral of St. Germain.

It used to be the custom for the sentry who was going off duty and had charge of the keys of the castle, which he had to deliver to the captain of the garrison, to be accompanied to the latter's apartments by the soldier forming one of the new guard or relief. To him the keys were to be next entrusted.

On one occasion, however, the sentry coming off duty had a little too much to drink, and in a fit of bravado declared he would go alone to the captain, even if he met the devil himself. For some seconds the soldiers in the guard-room could still hear the reverberations of his heavy footsteps on the flagstones of the passage and the clinking of his sword and armour; then all was quiet, till the silence was suddenly broken by the most spine-chilling screams, like those of a man taken by surprise and thrown into almost indescribable paroxysms of terror, intermingled with the most unearthly and terrible sounds. No one dared move or even speak, but

all sat cowering over the guard-room fire, gripped with such dread they did not even venture to glance around.

By degrees the sounds ceased. Once again the well known heavy footsteps and clanking of metal were heard, and presently into the guard-room walked, or rather, tottered, the sentry. He was ghastly pale, his eyes stared wildly and he was shaking all over.

Those were not the symptoms of drunkenness but of terror—abject terror. Three days later he died. Shortly before he died he said that on entering the captain's room he had seen the Mauthe Doog in the captain's chair, and he had never recovered from the shock it gave him.

The impression the Mauthe Doog gave to all who saw it was that it was not the ghost of any material dog, but a diabolical spirit in the form of a dog. It was furthermore thought that it only had the power to harm people who said and did wicked things, and for that reason the soldiers when on duty in the castle took care never to use bad or blasphemous language.

The origin of the haunting by the Mauthe Doog is supposed to date back to pagan times when, according to tradition, black magic was practised in the Isle of Man. There is no authentic record of the last appearance of the Mauthe Doog.

In Hood's Magazine of the forties of the last century another dog haunting is mentioned, not in Peel Castle itself but in its immediate vicinity. Strange noises were for a time heard at night coming from the rear of the castle. Some of the occupants of the castle, being curious to ascertain the cause of the noises, kept watch one night in the grounds. After they had been there for some time they heard the most unearthly cries and howlings, and a huge dark four-footed creature with fiery eyes rushed past them, plunged into the stream that flowed in the grounds and made for some trees in the near distance.

In a few moments there were harrowing screams and diabolical laughter. The sounds lasted for some minutes and then gradually died away, to be succeeded by an eerie silence. Utterly appalled, the watchers lost no time in returning to their quarters in the castle.

There is yet another traditional haunting associated with Peel Castle. Its origin dates to the reign of Henry VI. That unfortunate king incurred the animosity of the proud and lovely Eleanor, wife of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester. She was an adept in the black art and, aided by her paramour, Roger Bolinbroke, and Margery Jourdemain, the notorious witch of Eye, she made a wax image of Henry.

At midnight the three conspirators took the image to cross-roads, and, pronouncing maledictions on the King and uttering black art incantations, they pricked it with their knives. They then heated it in a fire and watched it gradually melt, begging Satan to inflict Henry with a wasting away malady. As a result of their evil deed the King was suddenly seized with a mysterious and very painful illness. The Duchess was suspected of being the cause of it. She, Bolinbroke and Margery Jourdemain were arrested.

Jourdemain was burned at Smithfield, Bolinbroke was horribly tortured and hanged, and the Duchess of Gloucester was imprisoned for life in Peel Castle. She died there after fourteen years, and ever since her death her ghost is rumoured to have haunted the castle and its vicinity.

The writer in Hood's Magazine credits Peel with yet another haunting. In the old days, beyond the cathedral there were ponds overgrown with weeds. A mother and her child had, it was said, suddenly disappeared from the neighbourhood, and mouldering skeletons believed to be theirs were found close to one of the ponds.

After their discovery the spot where they had been was for many years haunted by the phantom of a tall woman holding in her arms a ghastly pallid infant. No horse would pass the spot at night or any dog go near it.

### THE PHANTOM DRUMMER OF CORTACHY

ACCORDING to the traditional story of the haunting of Cortachy Castle, in Angus, a former Earl of Airlie numbered among his retainers a very handsome and engaging drummer, of whom he became exceedingly jealous.

The legend does not inform as to the cause of the jealousy, but one naturally infers that it had something to do with a woman, and who more likely than the Countess! Anyhow, one day the unfortunate drummer, taken unawares, was seized, bound hand and foot, thrust into his own drum, and hurled from one of the top windows of the castle on to the flagstones of the courtyard beneath. The result was instantaneous death.

It appears that the drummer had been threatened by the enraged Earl several times previously, and that he had been heard to say that, if his life was taken, he would never cease haunting the Airlie family. If this were so—and there seems to be no more feasible explanation of the hauntings—he has certainly been as good as his word, for whenever a member of the Ogilvie Clan, to which the Earl belongs, dies, the beating of a drum is heard, either in Cortachy Castle itself or somewhere on the estate.

In 1849, for example, a young lady of the name of Dalrymple went on a visit to Cortachy and, whilst dressing for dinner the night after her arrival, was greatly astonished to hear, close underneath her window, the sound of music. At first it was very faint, but it gradually grew and grew, until it finally resolved itself into the distinct beating of a drum.

Leaning on the window-sill she listened attentively, for there was something about the sounds, quite apart from their novelty, which fascinated her. On they went, louder if anything than before, and yet their loudness had a certain hollowness about it that Miss Dalrymple could not liken to anything

she had ever heard hitherto. She was still listening, immeasurably interested, when a rap came at the bedroom door, and the tattooing immediately ceased. It was the maid come to help her dress for dinner.

Miss Dalrymple casually inquired of the maid who the drummer was, and her astonishment was further increased on the servant replying that she had never heard of him, and was quite sure he was no one in the employ of his lordship. Determined to find an elucidation of the mystery, Miss Dalrymple waited till they were all seated at the dinner table, and then, turning to the Earl, she asked, somewhat abruptly:

'My lord, who is your drummer?'

Her remark produced an extraordinary effect. The Earl turned deadly pale, and an expression of terror swept over the face of the Countess, while everyone at the table suddenly broke off their conversation and appeared extremely embarrassed. Miss Dalrymple, at once seeing she had made a mistake, adroitly changed the subject and no further allusion was made to her experience till dinner was over and the company had retired to the drawing-room. She then mentioned the incident to one of the family, who looked very surprised, and said:

'What! Have you never heard of the drummer?'

'No,' Miss Dalrymple replied. 'Who in the world is he?'

'Why,' her companion responded, 'he is the family ghost of the Airlies, and is always heard beating a tattoo, either in the house or the grounds, whenever a death is impending in the family. The last time he was heard was just before the death of the Earl's first wife; and that is why the Earl turned so white, and the present Countess looked so frightened when you enquired who the drummer was. The subject is an extremely unpleasant one in this family, I can assure you.'

Miss Dalrymple was of course very much upset. The knowledge that her remark, made with all innocence, had caused such pain and alarm distressed her, while the idea of having to pass the night in the room whence she had heard those ominous sounds filled her with the grimdest apprehensions. It was not without considerable misgivings that, later on in

the evening, she said goodnight to her host and hostess and retired to rest.

Isolated and lonely as her quarters had seemed to her before, they appeared to be infinitely more so now, and as she glanced round the apartment at the massive four-poster, with its sepulchral-looking canopy, and the ebony wardrobe, the door of which swung suspiciously open on her approach, her heart failed her, and she paused irresolutely on the threshold. Her eyes then wandered to the cupboard by the fireplace, and she fancied she heard a slight movement in it, a surreptitious shuffling, as though some person was concealed within. Her hair rose accordingly and her heart gave a series of tumultuous pulsations. Nothing further happening, however, and all being quite still, she gradually recovered her self-possession and, trying to assure herself that there were absolutely no grounds for her fears, she walked boldly up to the wardrobe and, finding no one in it, next approached the cupboard, and that being empty too, she proceeded to undress and, getting into bed, soon fell asleep, not waking till the maid came to call her for breakfast.

The day passed quite uneventfully, and once more it was time to dress for dinner. Miss Dalrymple was before the mirror arranging her hair, when to her terror faint strains of music again arose from the courtyard beneath. Unable to tear herself away from the spot, she was compelled by some restraining influence to listen and, as before, the sounds grew and grew until they at last swelled into the loud, reverberating roll of a drum, which, although coming from apparently just beneath the window, had nevertheless a curious, far-away sound about it that was even more noticeable than it had been the previous evening.

Miss Dalrymple wondered now how she had ever associated those tattooings with anything earthly, they seemed to emanate so unmistakably from something supernatural, considerably accentuated by the fitful muttering of the wind, the rustling of the creeper round the window, and the black, swiftly scudding clouds.

Unable to endure the thought of spending another whole

day in the castle, Miss Dalrymple left early the following morning, and, calling on her way home at the house of some friends, told them what had happened.

Five months later the Countess of Airlie, though absolutely well at the time the phantom drumming was heard, was taken suddenly ill at Brighton and died within a few days. In a diary, subsequently discovered among her possessions, a note in her handwriting was found to the effect that, on hearing Miss Dalrymple mention the drummer, she intuitively felt the prognostication was intended for her—the Countess—and that her doom was irrevocably sealed.

The whole circumstances of the case were made known at the time to Mrs. Crowe, who published them some years afterwards in her book 'Night Side of Nature'.

Five years after Miss Dalrymple's experience, the drumming was again heard.

A certain young Englishman, whom I shall call Mr. Lovell, was on his way to the Tulchan, or shooting-lodge of the Earl of Airlie, where he had been invited to spend a few days by the Earl's eldest son and heir, Lord Ogilvie. He was riding a stout pony and had as a guide one of the Earl's keepers, also mounted, a typical Highlander, dour, tough and wiry. For two solid hours they had threaded their way across a bleak and desolate moor, with the wind from the mountain tops whistling in their faces and at times almost forcing them to a standstill. For the most part it was pitch dark, but occasionally a rift in the black, stormy clouds enabled them to catch a glimpse of the scenery through which they were passing. It was horribly inhospitable and monotonous—a wild expanse of brown sodden soil, interspersed at intervals with thick growths of gorse and bracken and big tarns and swamps, whose dark surfaces glittered ominously wherever they caught the straggling moonbeams. Here and there were the white trunks of decayed trees that lent an additional dreariness to the aspect, and brought with them a sense of isolation and depression. Lovell, strongly affected by it all, felt chilled both physically and mentally.

At last, to his relief, twinkling lights, which his guide informed him were those of the Tulchan, were seen some little distance ahead. Visions of hot drinks and a roaring fire now rose refreshingly before Lovell's eyes, and he was congratulating himself on having got so far without mishap when, from a low ridge of ground just in front of him, came the soft strains of music.

'Hulloa!' he exclaimed. 'What's that?'

The guide made no reply, but urged his pony to go faster. The music grew louder, and the clouds, suddenly parting, let through a broad belt of moonlight, which illuminated the whole landscape and threw into strong relief all the outstanding features. There was not another habitation of any kind, saving the Tulchan, visible for miles round, and no cover for anyone to find concealment in, excepting a few very low gorse bushes; consequently Lovell felt he must be mistaken, and that the music must after all emanate from the shooting-lodge. As they advanced it became louder and louder, until presently it developed into the unmistakable beating of a drum, a steady and continuous roll, that conveyed with it an extraordinary feeling of uncanniness.

Lovell again asked his guide the meaning of it, but the latter, pretending not to hear him, urged his pony into a furious gallop. They were soon level with the ridge and the few gorse bushes that lay scattered along it, but there were no signs of anyone in hiding there, and the drumming followed them.

On their arrival at the door of the Tulchan it abruptly terminated, nor did Lovell ever hear it again.

To his surprise Lord Ogilvie was not there to welcome him, and he was informed that his lordship had been unexpectedly summoned to London on account of the illness of his father. The following day news was received that the Earl had passed away in the night and Lovell was then informed that the drumming he had heard—and which the keeper now admitted having heard also—had been for many generations a sure prognostication of death in the Ogilvie family.

## THE GHOSTS OF THE BEECHES

MAJOR Horace Wyndham, R.E. (ret.), was looking for a house in the country. A firm of estate agents in Upper Norwood, to whom he went, gave him the names of a number of houses without success as the rent was too high, or he did not like the situation, and he was beginning to despair when they at length found The Beeches in Lancashire, with a very low rental. The estate was within thirty miles of Manchester.

Wyndham trained to Wrington, the nearest station to The Beeches, and from there took a taxi to Saxby, a large village on the outskirts of which The Beeches lay. It was a building shaped like two unequal sides of a rectangle. The walls were overgrown with ivy and tall trees sheltered it on either side. A winding carriage drive led up to the house, which was faced by a lawn, at the far side of which was a lake spanned by a long wooden bridge.

The bridge had a curious fascination for Wyndham. He leaned over the railing on one side of it, and peered into the water, wondering what secrets the dark depths might contain. The house was very old and had changed hands repeatedly.

He liked it, and took it on a three-year lease, returning to see the furniture moved in. His family, consisting of his wife, his son Robin, a cadet at Sandhurst, and his daughters, Nora and Lilian, were to follow him in two days.

After all the furniture had been assigned to their proper places and he had had supper, Wyndham sat for a time in front of a fire in the sitting-room, and then went to his bedroom. Besides himself in the house there was Mrs. Bird, the cook, and Gertrude Wise, one of the maids; the rest of the servants were to come with the family. He thought as he sat before the fire, prior to getting in between the sheets, how incongruous the furniture looked amid the old world settings

## THE GHOSTS OF THE BEECHES

—the oak panelling on the walls, the ingle and the ancient cornices.

He got out of his easy chair and was about to cross the floor when he stopped short, and rubbed his eyes to make sure he was not dreaming.

He was certain the pillow had been flat on the bed, had it not been he would have noticed it. But now it was upright, and no longer smooth. Its shape was changing, changing very gradually into the resemblance of a face, the distorted face of a man—eyes staring, mouth gaping and distended. Wyndham went to the bed and put the pillow in its place. The desire to get into bed had now gone. He resumed his seat by the fire. The bed, however, had a strange fascination for him. He felt obliged to look at it. The bedclothes moved and seemed to be in a state of convulsion. Presently they rose pyramidal higher and higher and assumed a figure like that of a mal-formed person, with a peak-shaped head. The now sinister fashioned eyes suggested malicious amusement, and the mouth leered mockingly. The size and malignity of the figure appalled Wyndham and for some moments he sat petrified.

At last, pulling himself together with an effort, he walked to the bed, and as he did so the figure subsided, and the clothes fell into their proper place.

'Absurd!' Wyndham muttered. 'Perfectly ridiculous! I must have been dreaming.' But he knew it was no dream and that there was something devilish funny about the bedstead. He did not relish the idea of sleeping in the dark but forced himself to do so, and slept soundly till the morning.

Nothing more of note occurred till after the family had moved in. Robin, who had finished his first term at Sandhurst, was the next to have an experience.

He was approaching the lake one afternoon when he saw two men, one tall, the other short, on the bridge. The tall man suddenly caught hold of the other, and, in spite of the smaller man's struggles, hurled him over the railings and into the lake. Full of anger at such a cowardly attack Robin rushed to the bridge, but on reaching it saw no sign of the tall man.

Yet he had been in the centre of the bridge—and there was nowhere for him to hide. Robin then peered down into the dark water. It was perfectly calm and undisturbed—nothing to be seen of the short man. Completely mystified he retraced his steps to the house, not mentioning the incident to anyone.

It was Nora's turn next. She was in the orchard taking down apples one morning when someone touched her shoulder. She turned round and was not a little startled to see a tall, shrouded figure in black confronting her. It remained stationary for some moments, and then, walking away, was lost to view among the trees.

Hastening to the house she told Lilian and Robin about the shrouded figure. Lilian laughed and said it must have been a monk from a neighbouring monastery. Robin thought of the man he had seen on the bridge, but still said nothing.

Mr. and Mrs. Wyndham occupied separate bedrooms, close to one another. Mrs. Wyndham was preparing to undress one night when the shaking of the heavy curtain covering the oriel window made her look wonderingly at it. There was no wind. It was a very calm night. She was still gazing at the curtain when it bulged out as if someone was standing behind it.

To utter a sound might make whoever was there emerge and attack her, so she stole as noiselessly as possible to the door, opened it, then sprang out to the landing and ran to her husband. He called Robin, and the two of them went into Mrs. Wyndham's room and searched everywhere. There was no trace of an intruder. The mystery of the bulging curtain remained unsolved.

Then, one of the maids told the cook that she had been awoken in the night by an icy hand on her forehead. She was so terrified that she buried her head under the clothes, and did not stir till the morning. She said if it occurred again she would leave.

The butler told Wyndham in confidence that the house was haunted—he had seen a shrouded figure in black bending over him in the night. It had been a dreadful shock.

But Lilian scoffed at the butler's account of his ghostly ex-

perience. 'It was a nightmare,' she said. 'He had eaten too much at supper.' He was a big eater.

Lilian's room was isolated at the end of the corridor. She had just got into bed one night when she heard footsteps in the corridor. They halted at the door of her room, and through the closed and locked door something crawled in. It looked vaguely like a person on all fours, and yet there was a non-human element about it—a semi-animal appearance. It had a scaly body and bald, bulbous head.

It came with a crab-like motion, stealthily towards her. Compelled by a force she could not resist, she sat up and watched the thing getting slowly nearer and nearer to her. Reaching the bed it crawled, to her terror, under it, and she felt the bed heave up.

Tumbling out of it, all her scepticism now gone, she rushed out of the room, down the corridor, and into Robin's room. He roused her father, and, armed with revolvers, they went to Lilian's room and not without some reluctance and apprehension looked under the bed and searched everywhere.

To their relief there was no sign of the thing Lilian claimed to have seen.

The Wyndhams were now in a very unsettled and perplexed state. They did not know what to do—stay or leave.

Another ghostly happening furnished them with an answer. They were sitting in the hall shortly before supper one evening, when there were screams from the servants' quarters and presently through the hall rushed the spectral form of a short man, his face convulsed with terror. Close on his heels came the figure of a tall man holding what looked like a meat chopper or axe in one hand. A gruesome light surrounded both figures. They passed through the wall of the room opposite their entrance.

Their exit was succeeded by the entrance in a body of the servants, who very excitedly informed Mrs. Wyndham that they could not stay another day in the house.

As the house could not be managed without servants, and it

was very doubtful if new ones would remain long, the Wyndhams were obliged to sacrifice money and leave.

The estate agents who had obtained the house for them now admitted that they were not surprised at their departure, as no tenants had remained in it for long. According to a traditional local story, about a hundred years ago a young brother had murdered his elder brother in the house in order to inherit a fortune, and had thrown the body into the lake.

It was this diabolical murder that was supposed to furnish an explanation for the haunting of The Beeches by the phantoms of the two brothers; but for an explanation of the other ghostly happenings one would have to look much further back, probably to black magical rites and acts practised on the site of The Beeches estate in very remote days.

### THE PHANTOM CLOCK OF PORTMAN SQUARE

THE idea that hauntings are invariably due to troubled and unhappy spirits of the dead ever seeking the prayers and consolations of the living is, of course, as any genuine psychical researcher knows, entirely erroneous. In many cases of hauntings, perhaps even in the majority, the nature of the phenomena suggests they are due to some species of spirit that has never inhabited a human body, and one which, far from pinning for the society of mankind, desires nothing better than to be left rigorously alone.

Such spirits are, as a rule, entirely antagonistic to all human beings. An example of this is the haunting of a house in Upper Gloucester Place, Portman Square, in the heart of London.

A few years prior to World War I the house, which had stood empty for some time, was taken by a Mr. and Mrs. Strawn. One night Mrs. Strawn could not, try as she would, go to sleep. She was reviewing in her mind, probably for the umpteenth time, the incidents of the day, and planning and arranging certain little jobs for the morrow, when she suddenly became conscious of an extraordinary stillness. It seemed forced and unnatural, the prelude, in fact, to something which her instinct told her would be alarmingly unpleasant.

A few minutes later, when her suspense had become well nigh unbearable, the hush was abruptly broken by the sonorous striking of a grandfather clock, the sounds apparently coming from the landing close to their bedroom door. But the Strawns had no such clock in their possession.

Although almost fainting with fright, Mrs. Strawn felt constrained to count the strokes. One, two, three, on and on it went till it struck twelve, and then, to Mrs. Strawn's astonishment, it struck once more. Thirteen. After that there was a short interval, and then once again the clock commenced

striking, and this time very slowly and with a curiously menacing intonation it struck five.

There then followed a heavy silence, which was eventually broken by Mr. Strawn whispering, 'Did you hear that, my dear? I wonder what it means.'

They were of course unable to say then, but Mrs. Strawn knew soon enough, for exactly five days later her husband met with a fatal accident while roller-skating at a rink in London.

After such an experience one might have thought that the first thing the widow would do would be to vacate the house, but for some strange reason she stayed; and for several years she was in no way disturbed. Then, suddenly, all kinds of queer noises, such as knockings on the walls and doors, and crashes, as of cartloads of crockery being dashed on the floor from a great height, were heard in the house. The noises, commencing as a rule at about midnight and lasting till two o'clock, continued night after night.

Mrs. Strawn, acting upon the advice of a friend, called in a medium, who, after staying in the house only a few minutes, took her departure, declaring she had seen and conversed with the spirit of a former occupant, and that there would be no more disturbances in consequence.

The disturbances continuing, however, Mrs. Strawn called in another medium. But the result was the same, and although the spirit who was responsible (a different spirit this time, by the way) was again said to be laid, there was no abatement of the trouble.

It was not until these futile attempts at exorcism had taken place that Mrs. Strawn thought of communicating with me. I then went to see her, and after hearing her story of the clock and other phenomena she had experienced, I told her that, in my opinion, the influence at work there emanated from some spirit that wanted her out of the house—a spirit that was inimical, if not actually evil. I also told her that it was, in all probability, an elemental—elementals being quite distinct and apart from the earth-bound spirits of the dead.

Even as I spoke, a feeling that it would be dangerous for her to remain in the house any longer came over me so strongly that I urged her to leave the place without delay.

I did not see her after that for several weeks, and then, quite by chance, I found myself sitting next to her at a theatre performance.

'Well,' I said, 'have you left the house?'

'No,' she replied. 'Somehow I couldn't tear myself away, and, do you know, I heard that phantom clock again last night. It struck thirteen first of all, just as before, and then very slowly it struck three. I have a relative who is very ill, and I cannot help feeling that it predicts death. What do you think?'

I could not say what I thought, for while she was telling me of the incident I had a strong presentiment that the ghostly clock had foretold her own death. I again urged her to leave the house at once.

Two days later—that is to say, on the morning of the third day after hearing the phantom clock striking—she was killed in a taxi-cab collision in Portman Square. The piece of glass that was the instrument of her death (it severed the jugular vein, and she died in exactly three minutes from the time she was struck) came from the window that was farthest from her, while the woman, an intimate friend, who was with her and sat next to the window was untouched, as also was a small dog that had sat on Mrs. Strawn's lap.

I heard nothing more of No. — Upper Gloucester Place for about a year. I then met a man at a friend's house one afternoon, who, happening to hear me tell a friend about Mrs. Strawn and the phantom clock, remarked, 'Oh, I know that house well. It has been haunted, so I have heard, for a very long time now and apparently by a variety of ghosts, as your clock ghost is quite new to me.' He then told us the following story.

'About thirty years ago an uncle of mine, hearing that the house was to be let at a very small rental applied for it to the agent.

'"I think I ought to tell you," the agent observed, after

my uncle had announced his desire to take it, "that the house bears a reputation for being haunted. Indeed, that is why we are offering it at such a low figure."

"Oh, that won't worry me," my uncle laughed, "for I don't believe in ghosts. They are all bunkum. But, tell me, has the house a history? I mean, has anything happened there, for although I don't care two raps about ghosts, I do not altogether relish the idea of living in a house where a notorious murder has been committed."

The agent smiled. "You can make your mind quite easy on that point," he said, "there has been no murder in it and, as far as I am aware, not even a suicide, though what may have happened on the site of the house before it was built I cannot, of course, say. The haunting is, I understand, confined to one room, the large back bedroom on the second floor, and I should advise you to convert it into a store-room."

My uncle laughed again. "Why, what nonsense!" he exclaimed. "I will sleep in it myself."

Finally my uncle took the house and within a few days moved into it. He was absolutely well at the time. Three months later he called to see me one morning, and I was appalled at the change in him. He must have lost a stone in weight, and, instead of having a healthy complexion, he had no colour at all; his face was all white and drawn and haggard. He had in fact altered to such an extent that I hardly knew him.

"Why, Uncle!" I exclaimed, after I had helped him off with his coat and handed him one of the brand of cigars I kept especially for him, "how ill you look! What's wrong with you?"

"Everything," my uncle groaned. "You won't believe me perhaps when I tell you, my boy, but I'm lost, lost body and soul. You can't conceive a more hideous fate."

He spoke so despairingly that I looked at him in amazement. Was it possible, I wondered, that he had become deranged since last I saw him?

"No," he replied, interpreting my thoughts, "I'm not mad, Jack. I wish I were. I'm horribly sane. You haven't seen me

since I took up my house in Upper Gloucester Place, have you?" I shook my head.

"I thought not," he went on. "Well, you may recollect my telling you that the agent said the house was haunted and strongly advised me not to sleep in a certain room. Well, like the fool I was, I only laughed at him and slept in the room he warned me against. For exactly a week nothing happened, and then one night I had an experience so hideous that I have never been able to dismiss it from my mind—not for a day, or an hour, or even a minute. Listen.

"Shortly after I got into bed I fell asleep and had the most singular dream. I thought, as I was lying there in bed, that the door of my room suddenly opened and a man in evening clothes, with a very white face, looked in at me and whispered, 'Come.' Well, I got up. Frightened though I was, for there was something about the man that was undoubtedly terrifying, I nevertheless felt constrained to obey, and followed him.

"Down the staircase he led me to the cellar under the pavement, where, to my astonishment, I saw a flight of stone steps going right down, down into, apparently, the bowels of the earth. I shrank back in horror, whereupon my guide turned round and once again whispered, 'Come,' and, as before, I was compelled to follow.

"He took me down countless steps till we finally arrived at a stone passage, along which we went till we suddenly found ourselves in a vast vaulted chamber. The centre of the floor was occupied by a long table, at which were seated a number of men and women, all with faces the same startling white as my guide.

"On my entrance a man sitting at the end of the table nearest the passage looked round and motioned to me to be seated, and though I would have given anything to retreat, I again found it impossible to do other than obey.

"When I had taken my place near him, I looked round at the company, who were conversing together in semi-whispers, and was at once struck by the mingled expression of furtive fear and utter hopelessness in their faces. They seemed to be

in a constant state of terror, of terror at each other, at their surroundings, and over and above all, at the form seated at the end of the table, that I had at first taken to be a man but which now seemed to me to be a strange and horrid cross between a human being and some particularly grotesque kind of animal.

“The horror with which the whole scene inspired me at length became so unbearable that, unable to endure it any longer, I sprang up, and was on the point of rushing out of the chamber when a woman seated at my side caught hold of me and, with the most surprising strength, pulled me back.

“It's no use,” she laughed, “you can't get away. We are all of us here for Eternity.”

“For the love of God, let me go,” I cried, turning to the thing seated at the end of the table. “I haven't done anything.”

“Oh, yes, you have,” was the reply, uttered in a strangely far away and hollow voice. “You have slept in the room you knew we haunted, and everyone who sleeps in that room is bound to come here sooner or later. Mr. Robert Percival slept there, and he is here now, so are Miss Sarah Hackett, Mrs. Emma Freeman, Colonel William Sacherell, and others.

“They all slept in that room and were drawn here by our atmosphere, which in a similar fashion drew you. We will let you go now, however, on one condition, and that is you promise us you will return here some time or other on June 21.”

“Well,” my uncle said with a groan, “I promised, and no sooner had I done so than everything became a blank, and I awoke to find myself in bed.”

“It was nothing more than a dream, Uncle,” I reassured him.

“Wait,” my uncle said. “It had all been so hideously vivid that I made enquiries and finally elicited the fact that a Mrs. Emma Freeman, a Miss Sarah Hackett and a Colonel Sacherell had actually lived in this house and died there. So you see I am lost. I have promised those fiends that I will return to them on June 21, and if I don't go of my own accord they will find a means of making me.”

‘I tried to laugh him out of it, but it was of no use, and finally I suggested he should leave the house and go abroad for a change. He wouldn't agree, however. The house seemed to have some extraordinary fascination for him—I have subsequently discovered it has for everyone who once stays there—and he remained.

‘I called to see him on the afternoon of June 21. He was apparently well then, though terribly nervous and restless. When I called again the following morning he was dead. He had died, so the doctor said, in his sleep, from heart failure.’

## HORROR IN SKYE

If you are anxious to contact people who are gifted with second sight and are born mediums, you should go to the Isle of Skye. There you may still find people who are genuinely clairvoyant and clairaudient.

The following is a true story of a strange happening in a Skye cottage.

A lady, who for convenience sake I will call Mrs. Grant, was staying for a time in Skye. She was much annoyed by hearing from Elspeth, one of her servants, that a shepherd had been telling her about a ghost he had seen in a cottage on the bank of the river Rhundunan. Mrs. Grant sent for the shepherd and rebuked him for frightening her maid.

'Indeed, ma'am, I am very sorry that you should be vexed with me,' he said, 'but were it to cost me my situation, I cannot sleep in that cottage after what I have seen there.'

'And what have you seen?' Mrs. Grant asked, greatly impressed by the serious manner of the shepherd.

'You may laugh,' he said, 'at what I am about to tell you, but it is absolutely true. During the last three nights I have been roused from my sleep by a queer noise in the room, and on looking around me I have seen the figure of Mary, one of your maids, all dripping wet, standing by my bedside. She has had her handkerchief tied round her head, and her arms folded over her breast. After gazing at me for a few moments, she has kissed me on the forehead and then glided across the room and stood for a few moments by the door. While I have been looking at her, she has suddenly and unaccountably vanished.'

'She did not harm you in any way?' Mrs. Grant said.

The shepherd shook his head. 'No, ma'am, but she scared me.'

Mrs. Grant tried to persuade him that he had either been

dreaming or someone had played a trick on him, but he maintained that what he had seen was supernatural.

Soon after Mrs. Grant had this conversation with the shepherd, she was with Mary getting linen out of a cupboard in Mary's room, when there was a sudden report as if a firearm had gone off in the cupboard.

'Oh, ma'am,' Mary exclaimed in horrified tones, 'there will be grave-clothes taken from that chest before this week is over.'

Mrs. Grant laughed at her.

The next day Mrs. Grant sent Mary with a message to Portree, which was a good distance from her house. It rained incessantly during Mary's absence, and the river she had to cross, which flowed at the foot of the park near Mrs. Grant's house, was very swollen.

As Mary was a very long time away, Mrs. Grant grew extremely anxious about her, and sent several people to search for her. Mary's body was found in the river. In attempting to cross the river at the ford she had missed her footing and had been drowned. What seemed so strange was that her arms were folded across her breast, and she had bound her head round with a handkerchief, just as the shepherd said he had seen her appear on three successive nights in his room.

The pistol report she and Mrs. Grant had heard in the linen cupboard in her room had been a portent of her own death.

## GHOSTS AND MURDER

ALTHOUGH ghosts, in spite of popular belief, do not as a rule appear with any definite purpose, there are plenty of well-authenticated cases in which they have played a very material part in the detection and prevention of crime.

One of the best known cases of this kind is that of the Cawood Castle murder. The story of this crime is as follows:

About noon one Tuesday in April, many years ago, a man named Thomas Lofthouse went into a field near Cawood Castle to water some quickwood. He had used one pail of water and was hurrying off to get another, when he suddenly saw, walking a few paces ahead of him, a young woman whom he at once recognized as his wife's sister. Very much astonished, as the woman's husband, William Barwick, had given him to understand she had left home on a visit the previous afternoon, he quickened his steps to overtake her, but no matter how fast he went, she kept the same distance ahead of him, although she apparently never altered her pace.

They continued in this fashion, he exerting himself to the utmost and she moving along calmly and without effort, till they came to the banks of a dreary-looking pond, where she sat down and began to dangle something white in the water. The object appeared misty and obscure, but his instinct led him to believe it was a baby. Mrs. Barwick had a child a few months old.

Lofthouse was about to advance to speak to her and ask what she was doing there, when she unexpectedly vanished, and he found himself merely staring into space.

Convinced now that what he had seen was a ghost, and feeling very alarmed in consequence, he hurried off and at once sought William Barwick.

'William,' he said, 'what has happened to your wife and child? I saw them both a few minutes ago by the side of the

pond near the castle, and it's my belief that they have met with foul play, and you know all about it!'

Barwick turned as white as a sheet and, looking horribly guilty, mumbled out something to the effect that as far as he knew his wife and child were still away on a visit.

Convinced from the man's demeanour that he was lying, Lofthouse now went to the authorities, who promptly had the pond dragged, with the result that the bodies of Mrs. Barwick and her child were found there.

Barwick was arrested and, on being charged with their murder, he confessed to having taken them unawares while out walking with them the previous evening, and to having thrown them both into the pond.

It is satisfactory to note that he was very quickly executed, but it is extremely doubtful whether the deed would ever have been brought home to him had it not been for the ghosts.

Another remarkable instance of ghostly intervention in connection with crime is that relating to the Guilsborough murder of 1764. Guilsborough is an ancient village in Northamptonshire about midway between Northampton and Market Harborough.

At the beginning of 1764 one of the most familiar figures in the neighbourhood was an old pedlar known as 'Scottie'. For many years he had visited the village regularly at intervals of about six or seven weeks, and when, after his last visit, about February or March, several months passed without his again being seen, people began to wonder what had become of him. Then an incident of a very startling nature occurred, which threw a sinister light on the mystery.

A boy named Seamount was overheard by the village schoolmistress to say to a play-fellow with whom he had had a quarrel that he would serve him as his father had served Scottie.

Her suspicions being aroused, the schoolmistress demanded of young Seamount what he meant, and on his refusing to explain, she shut him up in a cupboard and called in several of the leading lights in the village. They cross-examined the boy,

and eventually succeeded in extracting from him the following information.

It seems that on the evening of the day Scottie was last seen in the neighbourhood he had called, on leaving Guilsborough, at the Seamarks' house, which lay in a very lonely valley, just outside the village. Seamark had with him at the time two friends, John Croxford and William Butlin—both of whom bore a bad reputation—and on ascertaining that Scottie had done a very good day's business, the three men determined to put him out of the way. Plying the unfortunate pedlar with liquor till he was more than half drunk, they suddenly threw him on the ground and murdered him in the most barbarous fashion, subsequently cutting up the body and burning it in a brick oven.

This was the gist of young Seamark's story, and he furthermore declared that he and his brother had witnessed the entire transaction from a hole in the floor overhead, but were far too terrified to do anything.

On learning all this, certain of the local authorities at once went to the Seamarks' house, and, taxing Mrs. Seamark with a knowledge of the crime, received from her a full corroboration of everything the boy had said. As a result, Croxford, Butlin and Seamark were arrested, tried, and eventually hanged, all three, however, protesting to the last that they were innocent.

One evening shortly after the execution of these men, the chaplain of the Northampton gaol, where they had been confined, was sitting in his study, wondering if after all the trio had actually murdered Scottie. Not a few people in Guilsborough believed that the story of the murder was trumped up by Mrs. Seamark, who was known to have been not on the best of terms with her husband, and that circumstance, coupled with the fact that none of the trio had confessed, filled the chaplain with a certain amount of doubt as to their guilt.

He was leaning back in his chair, still thinking of the matter, when he suddenly felt he was no longer alone in the

room and, raising his eyes, saw to his amazement someone standing facing him on the opposite side of the table.

The light from the candles having for some inexplicable reason sunk very low, he could not at first distinguish who the stranger was, but on leaning forward and scrutinizing him, he saw with a thrill of horror that it was Croxford, the man whose execution he had attended some twenty-four hours previously. The chaplain tried to say something, but his terror was so great that his tongue clave to the roof of his palate and he could not articulate a syllable. He felt on the verge of fainting, when his visitor suddenly began to speak.

'I am John Croxford,' he announced, 'and I have come to tell you, so that you can afterwards inform the world, that I and my two companions, Butlin and Seamark, were alone responsible for the death of the pedlar. We murdered him exactly in the manner described by Mrs. Seamark and the boy, and if you desire a proof that it is in very truth the spirit of John Croxford that is now speaking, and that you are not dreaming, go to the field exactly behind the Seamarks' house and dig up the ground immediately behind the pump. There you will find a box, and in it the ring I took from Scottie's body. You can identify it because it bears this inscription, "Hanged he'll be who steals me", and never did a warning come truer.'

With these words he stepped back and seemed to amalgamate with the gloom, eventually becoming absorbed completely by it. The candles then suddenly burned again brightly, and nothing out of the ordinary was to be seen.

The chaplain, much mystified and strangely impressed, went on the morrow to the field at the back of the Seamarks' house, and, digging in the spot indicated, found there a box and in it the ring described.

An extraordinary case of what may be termed psychic intervention to prevent crime occurred at the beginning of the last century. A Mr. Thornton, of Fulham, dreamed one night he was in the garden at the back of his house, waiting for something, he did not know what, to happen. After a while he

heard voices, and in the moonlit space opposite him there appeared two people, his gardener and the kitchenmaid. They appeared to be engaged in earnest conversation, when suddenly the gardener, seizing the girl round the neck, threw her down and began to murder her.

Overwhelmed with horror, Mr. Thornton was endeavouring to go to her rescue when he awoke, bathed in sweat. He was so upset by the vision that it was some time before he could settle down again to sleep, and when at length he did doze off he dreamed exactly the same dream as before, waking up just as the climax was reached.

This time, feeling more than ever disturbed, he got up and, lighting a lamp, prepared to visit the spot where, in two successive dreams, he had witnessed the tragedy.

On reaching the kitchen, through which he had to pass, he saw to his surprise the kitchenmaid, dressed exactly as she had been in his dream, in a hat and cloak, as if prepared for a journey. He asked her why she was up and in her outdoor clothes at such an early hour, for it was not much after three o'clock, and, much abashed, she replied that she was about to meet Mark, the gardener, who was waiting for her at the garden gate with a horse and trap to drive her to the neighbouring village, where they were to get married.

Mr. Thornton told her he had no objection to her marrying the gardener, but he did not like her leaving the premises in so stealthy a fashion, and he bade her wait and not do anything rash till he had first of all interviewed her intended spouse.

He then hurried down the garden path as far as the gate, but could see no sign of any horse or trap or man, and he was about to return to the house when he fancied he heard someone digging. Following the direction of the sound, he drew up under cover of some bushes and saw the gardener hard at work, turning up the soil with feverish haste.

Feeling absolutely certain now that his dreams were intended to warn him that a horrible crime was about to be perpetrated, Mr. Thornton suddenly sprang out on the gardener and caught him by the shoulder. The man started

violently and, seeing who his assailant was, promptly fainted.

We are not told whether the marriage ever came off, but we presume the gardener did not remain long in Mr. Thornton's service, and that the girl at least was apprised of what had taken place.

Ghosts are not credited as a rule with any liking for courts of law, at any rate whilst proceedings are in progress, but according to T. Charley, a writer on supernatural lore during the last century, there is at least one instance of a ghost having put in an appearance at the assizes.

Charley states that a man was once placed on trial in an English court charged with murder, but so slight was the evidence against him that it was soon a foregone conclusion that he would be acquitted.

When the court had, as they thought, examined the last of the witnesses and were about to prepare for their recommendation of 'Not Guilty', the prisoner suddenly electrified everyone by leaning forward and pointing wildly to the apparently empty witness-box.

'My lord,' he exclaimed, 'it's not fair; it's not according to law. He's not a legal witness.'

The judge was about to rebuke him, when an idea seemed suddenly to flash across his mind, and he said in those gentle tones which none could assume at times better than he:

'Why is he not a legal witness? I believe the court will allow his evidence to be quite good, when he begins to give it.'

The prisoner, however, shook his head and, trembling violently all over, cried: 'No, no, it cannot, it must not be. No man can be allowed to be a witness in his own case. He is a party, my lord—he cannot stand where he is.'

Everyone present was now becoming intensely interested, though greatly perplexed as to what it all meant.

'You are mistaken,' the judge replied calmly. 'Every witness who comes here has a perfect right to speak. It is for us to determine the legality of his evidence when he gives it.'

Upon hearing this the prisoner was so overcome that for some seconds he could not utter a sound. He then exclaimed

in a voice of the greatest agony: 'My lord, my lord, if you allow him to speak, I am a dead man!' And, repeating over and over again the words 'a dead man', he swayed, and would have fallen had not a chair been given to him.

The judge then told the prisoner that he believed a guilty conscience was tormenting him, and begged him to say what it was he had on his mind. The prisoner hesitated at first but, after appearing to undergo the most terrible struggle with himself, finally confessed he was guilty of the crime charged to him. He declared that he now confessed and told the truth for no other reason than that he was afraid to do otherwise in the presence of the man he had killed. He had seen him, he said, enter the court and with noiseless steps proceed to the witness-box, where he was still standing, pointing to the ghastly wound in his throat that caused his death.

Charley states that although no one saving the prisoner saw the ghost, by far the greater number of those present believed it to be actually there, and stoutly refused to accept the theory that the accused was merely the victim of an hallucination. Anyway, his confession was accepted, and he was forthwith found guilty and duly executed.

It is not, however, invariably the case, as the following will show, that the unknown powers are successful in their endeavours to frustrate the designs of those who contemplate crime.

Some years ago there lived at Portlaw, a small village nine or ten miles from Waterford, an innkeeper called Adam Rogers. One night Rogers dreamed he was standing in a very barren and deserted spot on a mountainside. It was daylight, but although the sun was shining very brightly, it did not seem in any way to diminish the awful feeling of loneliness and depression with which the place inspired him. Everything about it, the colouring, conformation, and even the soil, suggested something hideously evil, while the very atmosphere was impregnated with a sense of impending tragedy.

While he was standing still and taking all this in, voices suddenly fell on his ears and he became aware of two men coming along, side by side, towards him. The one was very

tall, with broad shoulders and a curious, slouching kind of walk. He had a swarthy complexion and strongly marked features, with something about them that was decidedly sinister and alarming.

His companion, on the other hand, who seemed to belong to a superior class, was a puny little man with a singularly mild and benevolent countenance.

Neither of them apparently noticed Rogers, but continued talking with much animation till they arrived at a ditch. Here they paused, and the little man was in the act of stepping across the ditch when his companion suddenly picked up a big stone and struck him violently on the head with it.

Rogers tried to cry out and rush to the rescue, but he found himself unable to make a sound or move a limb, and in this state he was compelled to witness a most horrible and cruel crime, which was enacted with the most extraordinary vividness. He awoke only on its completion, and when the murderer was rising from his knees with a dreadful grin of satisfaction.

The dream impressed Rogers so much that he narrated it to his wife, and they were still discussing it when the door of the inn opened and two men entered. To Rogers' dismay he saw at once that these two strangers were absolutely identical with the two men who had figured in his dream.

They asked for luncheon, and appeared to be on the best of terms; but Rogers, observing them closely, was now even more convinced than he had been in his dream that a great social gulf lay between them.

The big, burly, sinister-looking man, whose name was Caulfield, was rough and uncouth, while the smaller of the two, whom his companion addressed as Mr. Micky, had both the speech and manners of a gentleman.

Rogers was so greatly perturbed that, when Mr. Micky came into the parlour to pay the bill, he tried to persuade him to stay the night there and let Caulfield continue his journey alone. Instead, however, of telling Mr. Micky why he was so anxious on his behalf, Rogers, for fear of being laughed at, made no mention of his dream at all and merely succeeded in

mystifying his visitor, who failed to see any rhyme or reason in his endeavours to detain him.

The strangely assorted pair went off together, and that very night the news reached Rogers that the body of a man, horribly mutilated, had been found on the mountainside a few miles from Portlaw. Full of the gravest apprehension, Rogers, accompanied by his wife, went to view the body, and they both identified it at once as that of Mr. Micky. They then told the authorities of the visit of Mr. Micky and Caulfield to their inn, expressing it as their opinion that Caulfield was the murderer. In consequence, Caulfield was arrested at Waterford just as he was about to embark for Newfoundland, and, bloodstains being found on his clothes, he was formally charged with the murder of Mr. Micky.

At the trial Rogers not only proved that Micky was last seen in company with Caulfield but described every article of dress the two men had been wearing on the day of the murder with such exactness that the accused, who had hitherto maintained an air of the utmost indifference, was at last roused out of his lethargy and, turning to Rogers, cried excitedly:

'How is that you, an innkeeper, used to all kinds and conditions of people visiting you, should have paid such particular attention to what two more or less ordinary customers wore on that particular day? Does it not strike you and everyone else here that it is most extraordinary?'

'Maybe,' Rogers replied, 'but I had a particular reason,' and he then described his dream. During Rogers' recital the prisoner remained absolutely silent and in an apparently dazed condition, in which he continued whilst his namesake, Sir George Caulfield, who at that time was Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench in Ireland, pronounced sentence of death.

Before his execution, however, Caulfield admitted that he was guilty, and declared that every detail in the dream which Rogers had narrated in court was absolutely true. He added that as soon as he set eyes on Rogers he felt, somehow, that they had met before, and that Rogers would, in some remarkable manner, play a fateful part in his destiny.

### A HAUNTED HAMPSTEAD HOUSE

HAD I not known a friend of an intimate friend of the senior partner of a firm of estate agents in Haverstock Hill, I feel pretty certain I could never have obtained the keys of No. — Church Walk, Hampstead, for the purpose of conducting there a midnight vigil.

As it was I had some difficulty since, according to the rules of the firm, the keys of all the houses on their list had to be returned to the office before it was closed for the night, and I, of course, wanted to keep them overnight, in order to watch for the ghost which was reputed to haunt the place.

I had heard, on pretty reliable evidence, that the house in question was one of the worst haunted houses in London. I chose a night in September for my investigation because, in my experience, ghostly demonstrations occur more often in this month than in any other. I had no idea what form the manifestations took; whether they were merely auditory, or visual, or both. All I knew about them was that they were reputed to be most alarming.

I arrived there, alone, about eleven o'clock. In most empty and long-deserted houses there is a feeling of loneliness; and certainly in this house there was a feeling of intense loneliness. I was conscious of it directly I crossed the threshold—and I was conscious also of a sensation of acute depression. That thoughts and emotions poignant enough to permeate the atmosphere linger, to influence and affect certain super-sensitive minds is, I think, now recognized by most serious students of psychical search.

'How someone must have suffered!' was my first thought on entering, and hardly had I conceived it, when from close beside me came a curious sound, half a sigh and half a shudder.

With the aid of my torch I looked sharply round. No one was there.

I examined the rooms on the ground floor and basement, and everywhere I went I had the uncomfortable feeling of being followed and closely watched.

It was when I had finished examining the kitchen and was in the hall that I first heard footsteps—distinct pattering footsteps, that at once conjured up mental visions of a child. They came down the stairs towards me, halted and then abruptly retreated, as if panicked.

As I went up the stairs after them I again heard that queer shuddering sigh, this time just in front of me.

Having gone into all the rooms, I decided to hold my vigil on the staircase leading from the top landing to the floor immediately beneath it. A staircase is often the most haunted place in a house, and I instinctively felt it was so in this house.

Again and again as I sat there in the dark, listening and watching, I heard the stairs below me creak, as if someone was creeping very stealthily and surreptitiously up them; and several times I heard that harrowing half-shudder, half-sigh; but I saw nothing.

About three o'clock, tired of sitting on the hard stairs for so long, I got up and was crossing the landing beneath when I bumped into someone or something.

I flashed my torch. No one, nothing was to be seen, but as I stood there staring around my eyes became focused on the handle of a door facing me. It was the door of a room I had been into, and I remembered closing it after I left it. It was still closed, but the handle was turning, and presently the door very slowly commenced opening. . . .

It took a very great effort on my part to go to the door, throw it wide open and look into the room. No one was there, but as my light played over the bare boards and walls I very distinctly heard a door on the other side of the landing gently open and as gently close.

Someone or *something* was undoubtedly moving about.

Startled by this realization, I let my torch fall. As I was stooping to pick it up it was thrust into my hand!

That such an apparently considerate and, on the face of it,

ordinary act should have produced a paralysing effect on me may seem to some people extraordinary, but I can only say it did, and that for some moments I was utterly demoralized.

When eventually I recovered sufficiently to switch on my light, to my relief I saw nothing. I was seemingly alone, and yet I had the very uncomfortable feeling that a presence of none too pleasant a nature was standing close beside me.

I spent what remained of the night on the staircase leading from the first storey to the ground floor.

The darkness of the night had for some time given way to the grey early morning when the front door opened and a red-haired woman, carrying a carpet bag in one hand, entered. I wasn't sorry to see that charwoman. She made me realize that the horrors of the night were at last over.

It was futile to remain there any longer, so I came away.

'And you actually saw nothing?' my friend remarked when I narrated my experience to him.

'Nothing,' I replied, 'and I stayed there till the charwoman or caretaker arrived in the morning.'

'Char or caretaker!' he said, with growing interest. 'What was she like?'

I told him.

'Why, my good man,' was his answer. 'Then you did see something after all. That was the ghost!'

He went on to tell me that, according to rumour, many years before a red-haired woman had murdered and dismembered a child in the house and carried away the remains in a CARPET BAG.

## THE HAUNTED QUARRY

I HAD never been in Galway till I went on a visit to my friends the Dillons. They were having a house warming, having only just come to the house, Ballybrig Castle. The castle was really a castellated house, quite new. Indeed, the Dillons were the first occupants.

It was built on virgin soil, no other house nearer to it than a mile. Fronting it was a newly fashioned terrace lawn, and beyond that a rugged field with sparse trees, a hillock, and a quarry. In the rear of the house was a yard enclosed with high walls, and a pool, said to be fathomless.

The Dillon family consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Dillon, three girls, Nora, Sally and Deirdre, and two sons, Daniel, an architect, and Christopher, a sailor in the Royal Navy. He was home on leave.

I had the feeling that there was something very queer about the house the first night I was in it. Something I had never experienced before, too subtly unusual to explain.

Tired after a long journey I went to bed earlier than usual, and soon fell asleep. Something woke me sharply, and I had a feeling that something startling was about to happen. The window magnetized me. I got up and went to it. The night was fine, and very still; every object in the landscape stood out very clearly. A big dark Galway hare scurried across the ground and a night bird hooted dismally.

Looking in the direction of the quarry I saw a misty shape emerge from it, and come slowly towards the house. It was tall, and gave me the impression of something human in form but with unusually long spidery arms and legs, and a rotund head—something not unlike a giant Dutch doll. It came striding along in the moonlight, its arms hanging loosely by its side.

Fascinated I watched it drawing nearer and nearer, till it reached the house, when it swerved, swung round and strode

in the direction of the yard and stabling. The house dogs whined and growled for a few seconds, and were then silent. I sensed that they were very frightened.

I could not drag myself away from the window for some time. Eventually I released myself from the magnetic chain that bound me, and went back to bed.

I did not say anything about my experience to the Dillons.

The following morning Nora came down to breakfast looking pale and as if she had not had a good night. She then told us that she had had a very jarring experience. It was similar to mine.

Deirdre was the next to have a queer experience. She was on the lawn throwing a ball to Pickle, one of the dogs. She threw it further than she intended, and it went into a bush. She told Pickle to go after it, but on getting near the bush he stopped, his hair bristled, and he whined and growled.

Deirdre looked behind the bush. There was a whizzing sound, the ball was thrown back over the bush, but she could not see who or what threw it. It left her somewhat disturbingly thrilled.

Then Sally, while standing on the hillock one morning felt a hand clutch hold of her ankle and deliberately try to trip her. She screamed and the hand let her go. It was a big bony hand with long fingers.

Without daring to look around her she ran to the house.

The boys now regarded the haunting seriously. Daniel had a friend, Herbert Ranger, who was a member of a psychical research society, and he invited him to the castle.

Ranger came and listened very attentively to the accounts of the haunting, including mine.

'I don't know what I can do,' he said. 'I am just a researcher and more or less a sceptic. I can't exclude the possibility of it being a case of nerves and imagination with Nora. She saw what she thinks is a ghost. Fear is infectious, and Sally and Deirdre and you, Mr. O'Donnell, fancy you saw a ghost too.'

'It was no fancy,' Sally said. 'Had I not screamed I should have fallen. Mr. O'Donnell is not neurotic. He saw the ghost.'

Ranger smiled. 'He thought he did. I will have a look at the quarry, as it is from there your ghost apparently comes.'

After supper he sat talking till after eleven, and then set off alone to the quarry.

'I hope to goodness he will see the ghost,' Sally said, 'and be damned well scared.'

'It will take a lot to scare Herbert,' Daniel laughed. 'He is very tough.'

'Just the sort to get scared,' Christopher said. 'I know the type. Cocksure and supercillious.'

We all waited anxiously for Ranger's return. At last he came.

'Did you see anything?' we cried.

'I saw something,' he said.

'What?'

'I imagine it is what Tylor,\* the authority on nature spirits, calls an elemental. He believes that everything has a spirit—trees, stones, rocks; and they live harnessed to the things to which they are so closely allied till something happens to detach them. In this case it was the making of the quarry. When that was effected a nature spirit became loose and wandered abroad. Such nature spirits are harmless, or the reverse. In this case it is the reverse, and I strongly advise you to have the quarry filled in, or sell your house.'

'To fill it in would be a hard job,' Christopher said.

'I don't think so,' Daniel said. 'The Galway Corporation might be glad to have an additional place to pitch their rubbish. I'll get in touch with them.'

He did, and the quarry was gradually filled in.

When the filling was completed—the quarry was not so very deep—the haunting of Ballybrig Castle ceased.

\*Prof. Tylor was a well-known nineteenth century animist.

FROM time to time I have come in contact with what I have believed to be entities from another world. One such occasion happened when I was living in a village in the Midlands.

There was a man named William Roberts, who was a builder. He was a widower and lived alone in a cottage. There was rather a mystery regarding the death of his wife, who was drowned in a pond.

In appearance William Roberts was far from prepossessing. He was about five feet eight inches in height, stocky and hunch-backed. He had a large head, big, mal-shaped ears, very light blue eyes under shaggy eyebrows, and a blotchy complexion. The ground on which he lived belonged to a Mr. Reginald Cliff, who occupied The Gables, a picturesque house about two hundred yards from Roberts' cottage.

The Gables was at one time a small house. Roberts had lived in it and without the permission of Mr. Cliff, who was the landlord, had added to it, and for that reason he actually had the audacity to think The Gables belonged to him. Mr. Cliff naturally opposed any such claim, had him ejected, and lived in The Gables himself. He kindly permitted Roberts to rent the cottage near him.

Roberts nourished a bitter animosity against Mr. Cliff for denying his right to The Gables. I never liked Roberts and always tried to avoid him out-of-doors. On one occasion, however, I was obliged to meet him. He at once started his usual harangue against Mr. Cliff, and said that when he died he would haunt The Gables and drive Mr. Cliff and his family out of it. I was shocked at the venom in his voice and the malign glitter in his light eyes.

He had a stroke soon after my encounter with him, and died from the effects of it. Shortly after his death I left the village and returned to London.

A year or so later the Cliffs asked me to spend a weekend with them. The night of my arrival at The Gables I occupied a room at the end of a corridor on the first floor. Tired from my journey and much walking before I embarked on it, I fell asleep almost before I was between the sheets.

I awoke with a start and a feeling that something was about to happen. Fancying I heard a sound close to me, I sat up. It was a fine night—I had not drawn the curtains as it was very warm—and the moonlight flooding the room rendered every article in it clearly visible. There was nothing to account for the noise.

I was still glancing around when two figures—those of a man and a woman—emerged from one of the walls. Their white faces showed no animation, they were those of the dead. In spite of his dreadful corpse-like appearance I recognized the male apparition at once. It was William Roberts. The female phantom did not resemble Mrs. Roberts nor anyone I had ever seen.

In the course of very many nocturnal vigils in houses and places reputed to be haunted, sometimes alone and sometimes with other people, I have been badly jarred, but seldom if ever more so than on this occasion. There was something so indescribably evil and sinister about the figures, and when they came towards me I scrambled out of bed and on to the landing.

However, I quickly pulled myself together and went back to the room. To my great relief the apparitions had gone, and there was nothing more ghostly than the white pillows gleaming in the moonlight.

In the morning I related my experience to the Cliffs, who said they had frequently been disturbed by noises at night but had never seen anything. When the Roberts lived in the house there had been one large room at the end of the corridor. After they left Mr. Cliff had made a partition in the room, dividing it into two, a fact of which I was unaware. This, the Cliffs thought, might account for the apparitions seeming to emerge from the wall, which actually was the partition.

Contrary to their wish, I slept another night in the same room but did not see the ghosts again.

William Roberts failed in his design to drive the Cliffs from The Gables, for they lived in it for many years, long after the ghostly disturbances ceased.

## PEARLIN JEAN OF ALLANBANK

A TRADITIONAL tragic story is associated with Allanbank, a seat of one of the several lines of Stuarts.

About the middle of the eighteenth century Sir Robert Stuart, the youthful owner of Allanbank, went one summer to France to study the French language. While there he chanced to meet a very pretty Sister of Charity named Jean and became infatuated with her. At first she repelled his advances, reproving him severely for venturing to make love to one who had so entirely given herself up to a life of self-denial and unworldliness. He was however so persistent and pleaded his cause with such apparent whole-hearted earnestness that she yielded at last to his entreaties and agreed to marry him.

The courtship seemed to run smoothly for a time; then, suddenly tiring of the trustful girl but not daring to break off the engagement openly, Stuart wrote to her saying he had to return to Scotland on urgent business.

He made preparations very covertly for the journey, and was seated in the coach ready to start for the nearest port when Jean appeared and begged to be taken with him. A painful scene ensued, Jean eventually climbing on to the forewheel of the coach in a vain endeavour to get into the vehicle, while the callous Stuart ordered the coachman to start off. The coachman obeyed, with the result that Jean slipped from the wheel on to the ground and was driven over and crushed to death. Quite unmoved, the inhuman Stuart drove to the coast and sailed thence to Scotland.

It was late afternoon when he got to Allanbank and the shadows of night were already blackening the roadside. There was an ominous stillness about the place, a sense of some impending uncanny happening.

On approaching the lodge archway leading to his ancestral house, the horses of his carriage shied, and it took all the skill

and coolness the driver possessed to steady them. Wondering what was the matter with the horses, Stuart looked out of the carriage window and received a terrible shock.

Peering down at him from the top of the stone archway was a luminous white face. As he stared at it, too spellbound with terror to utter a sound or even stir, its eyes suffused with an expression of fiendish glee, while a white hand moved slowly upward and pointed to the forehead, which bore the marks of a ghastly wound.

For a moment he did not recognize the face, and then suddenly he realized it was the face of the dead Jean, but that in it there lurked a something that he could not associate with the gentle, affectionate creature he had so wantonly made love to in France.

He was still gazing at it in horror when the carriage horses plunged suddenly forward, tore through the archway and along the avenue leading to the house. Above the clatter and rumble of the wheels, however, he could hear a loud mocking laugh, which followed him for some distance and then gradually died away in a long, plaintive wail.

That night strange things happened at Allanbank. The inmates of the house were awakened by the opening and shutting of doors and the pattering of high heels on the stairs and in the passages.

A young footman, curious to discover who was disturbing the household at so late an hour, crept out of his room and downstairs on to one of the landings. He was about to tiptoe along a corridor when the sound of footsteps ascending the staircase at the far end of it made him hurriedly conceal himself in an alcove. As he crouched there, fearful lest he should be discovered, the footsteps left the stairs and he could hear them in the corridor—the regular, measured tap, tap of high heels on the polished oak floor—coming his way.

Nearer and nearer they drew, accompanied by the rustling of a silk dress. Just as they were close to the alcove the moon, which had hitherto been obscured by a dark cloud, suddenly showed, clear and bright, through an oriel window near at

hand and illuminated the whole corridor with its white, penetrating rays.

The young footman gave himself up for lost and was ransacking his mind for some plausible excuse for his presence in the corridor when the steps drew level with the alcove, and to his unbounded astonishment he saw—no one. How he got back to his room he never quite knew, but he arrived there some way and hid under the bedclothes, quaking, until daybreak.

From that time onward hardly a night passed without uncanny happenings. Sir Robert Stuart, who had lost all his former gaiety and light-heartedness, went to some place in either a border county or actually in England, and returned after several months with a bride.

On the night of their homecoming no one slept. Doors continually flew open and closed with loud bangs; light, tapping footsteps were heard running to and fro, as if someone was in a state of great agitation; and sighings and moanings sounded first in one part of the house and then another, though more particularly on the landing outside the room in which the young laird and his newly-wedded wife slept.

No less than seven ministers were sent for simultaneously to lay the unhappy spirit, but Jean would have naught to do with them or their prayers and continued her ghostly disturbances the moment they were gone.

Seized with a sudden inspiration, Stuart got a portrait of Jean and hung it on the wall of the dining-room between the portraits of himself and his wife. There was then comparative peace at night for some weeks.

But the sight of Jean's face reposing tranquilly on the wall next to her husband became at length so intolerable to Lady Stuart that she insisted on having the portrait placed somewhere out of sight. That night Jean was back at her old ghostly pranks and was more disturbing than ever.

Sir Robert Stuart, realizing the futility of trying to get rid of Jean, resigned himself to being haunted by her, which he continued to be incessantly till his death. When that happened the haunting of Allanbank ceased.

A certain Mr. Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, who lived in Edinburgh during the eighteenth century, numbered among the members of his household Jennie Blackadder, a nurse, and Betty Norrie, a housekeeper, both of whom had formerly been servants at Allanbank.

Jennie affirmed that she often used to hear the tapping of high-heeled shoes along the corridor in the Stuart mansion, but although the sounds sometimes passed close to her she never saw anything. Betty Norrie, on the other hand, affirmed that she and some of the other maids used to see the ghost of Pearlin Jean so often, that in the end they got quite used to her and were never scared, except when she emerged suddenly from some dark nook or corner and took them unawares.

## THE HAUNTING OF ALLUM COURT

RALPH ALDRUM, a keen psychical researcher, hearing reports of the haunting of Allum Court, a country mansion not far from Taunton, wrote to Mr. Walter Smith, the owner of the house, asking permission to spend a night or two there with a friend.

Mr. Smith, who was in Paris at the time, gave his consent and expressed his desire to accompany Aldrum and his friend. 'I hardly know the place,' he wrote, 'as my uncle who left it to me has only died recently.'

A date was fixed for the three men to go to Allum Court, but owing to Smith being unexpectedly detained in London he was unable to travel to the house with Aldrum; consequently Aldrum and his cousin, Jack Dean, went there without him.

It was about six o'clock in the evening when they arrived at Fairland, the nearest station to Allum Court. There they were met by a dog-cart and an old groom—it was before the days of motor-cars. The Court, which was in a slight hollow, was a rambling old building covered with ivy up to the chimneys. A great hall, in the centre of which was a large round table, faced the travellers on entering. A wide black oak staircase led to a gallery connecting the two wings of the house, the East and West.

No one was living in the house. The caretakers, Mr. and Mrs. Brown, lived at the lodge. Mrs. Brown had prepared a hot meal for the two visitors in the spacious dining-room, and after it Aldrum and Dean went for a stroll in the grounds.

It was a fine night, deliciously fresh after the stuffy atmosphere of London. A gravel path circled a picturesque lake at the far end of the wide, well-kept lawn, and a belt of larches and fir trees threw black shadows over the deep, dark water. The two men had just reached the gravel path when they saw coming towards them a woman in a white or light dress. She

was carrying a bundle in her arms. When about twenty yards from them she stopped. There was a glorious yellow moon, and the light from it focusing on her revealed her face with quite startling clearness. It was very pale. She appeared to be young with dark hair and eyes.

The bundle was a baby. Raising it in her arms, with an expression of the utmost loathing and hatred in her face, the woman hurled the baby into the lake. Then, turning, she walked swiftly away, disappearing from sight in the gloom and shadows of the trees.

For some moments the two men were too overcome with horror to move or speak. The ghastly incident had been enacted in absolute silence, neither the woman nor the child uttering a sound. There had been no sound of a splash when the child entered the water, and the woman had gone as noiselessly as she had come.

The realization of this came to the two men simultaneously, and they intuitively felt that what they had witnessed must have been the ghostly re-enaction of a horrible crime. The eeriness of the spot affected the men to such an extent that they made quick tracks for the house.

They were tired and soon went to their respective bedrooms. Aldrum was warming himself by the fire in his room, for the night had become chilly, when Dean entered. He said that after what had taken place in the grounds he felt too shaken to remain alone. The two decided that instead of going to bed they would sit all through the night by the fire. For some time they talked and smoked, then gradually their conversation waned and they both dozed.

Aldrum was the first to wake. The sound of a distant clock striking twelve fell with startling distinctness on the stillness that reigned everywhere. Dean was still fast asleep. Aldrum experienced a curious sense of expectation, a waiting for he knew not what. Presently he heard the tap, tap, tap of light hurried footsteps coming along the corridor outside the room. Hardly had they passed the door when there was an awful wailing scream followed by the slight sound of a struggle.

Dean was awake in an instant and sprang to his feet. 'Good God!' he cried. 'What was that?'

Aldrum threw open the door and they both peered apprehensively up and down the corridor. Nothing was to be seen but a long spray of ivy that waved and swayed in the breeze, beating gently against the window at the end of the corridor nearest to them. They were far too scared to sleep again and sat in the room with two candles burning till daylight. They said nothing about what happened to Mrs. Brown.

During the afternoon Smith arrived. He was very interested to learn of their experience.

'The uncle who left me this place and seldom stayed here told me there was a ghostly legend associated with it,' he said. 'In the reign of Charles II one of his and my ancestresses lived here. She was very beautiful—her portrait was painted by Lely. Even in that dark age of immorality she was conspicuous for her wickedness, and for her many evil deeds was doomed after death to haunt for ever this house and grounds.'

'To all people but the heir of every third generation she appears as she was in life, young and lovely. To him she is in a form as hideous as her soul was bad.'

And he added: 'Unless I marry and have a child my line of Smiths ends with my death.'

'Are you not scared lest you should see the hideous ghost?' Dean asked.

Smith laughed. 'No! I have never seen a ghost and never shall. I am not psychic like you two must be.'

After their evening meal all three men went into the grounds. It was a glorious moonlight night, hardly a breeze and very still. Occasionally an owl hooted and a far off dog barked.

They had got to the gravel path by the lake when Dean clutched Aldrum by the arm. 'There she is!' he cried. Coming along the path was the same woman carrying the baby wrapped in a dark cloth in her arms. As she drew nearer and came into the moonbeams every feature in her face was thrown into strong relief against the dark background of nearby trees and

bushes. There was a half frightened, half resolute look in her lovely expressive eyes. She had got to about twenty yards from them when she halted, her face suddenly convulsed with an expression of loathing and fiendish hatred. She raised her arms and hurled the baby into the lake; then, as on the preceding evening, she turned sharply and walked quickly away.

This time, however, there was a certain indistinctness or something shadowy about her as she went that they had not noticed before. Aldrum and Dean asked Smith what he thought of the dreadful drama they had just witnessed, and he replied: 'I have not seen anything. I told you that I would not as I am not in the least degree psychic.' But he did not doubt that they had really seen what they described. He thought that the lovely phantom woman might well have been his wicked ancestress, and the child she threw into the lake the product of her alleged incest. He suggested that they should all sit in the corridor that night and await the advent of the tapping ghost.

So at about three minutes to eleven the three men sat, a few feet apart, outside Aldrum's room. Their only light was from the moon which was visible through the end window. They were half asleep when the house-clock struck twelve. They tensed immediately, their ears strained to catch the anticipated tapping. But no sounds were heard, everywhere was still. After a few minutes had elapsed Smith yawned. 'The ghost won't come,' he said. 'Ghosts never come after midnight.'

Aldrum lit a candle and looked at his watch. He had taken the precaution to set it by the church clock that morning. The church clock was fast—it was not quite twelve. He blew out the light and was about to say something when the door at one end of the corridor opened and closed. The silence that followed was soon broken by the tap, tap, tap of high heels on the hard boards. It was a measured tread, light yet determined, accompanied this time by a sound between a swish and a rustle, like the brushing of a silk dress against the walls of the corridor. Nearer and nearer the tapping came, yet still nothing was to be seen.

As the invisible feet passed Aldrum he could feel the boards quiver under them. Dean was sitting a little distance behind Aldrum. Hardly had the sounds passed Dean when Smith suddenly rose from his seat.

'Take the thing away!' he shouted hoarsely. 'Take the cursed thing away! Oh my God!' He gave a gasping cry of terror and fell.

The next moment there was the awful spine-chilling wailing scream that Aldrum had heard the previous night; and then a death-like silence. And it *was* death, for when Dean bent over the prostrate Smith and felt his wrist, there was no sign of life.

The doctor whom they summoned said Smith's death was due to shock and excitement, that he had had heart disease.

Remembering what Smith had told them about the heir of every third generation seeing the phantom of his evil ancestress in an inconceivably hideous form, Aldrum and Dean believed that Smith had at last seen a ghost.

### THE GHOSTS OF THE WHITE GARTER

THAT haunted inns should be far more frequently met with than haunted houses of any other kind seems only natural when one considers that in bygone days so many inns were nothing more or less than death-traps—dens into which travellers were lured and surreptitiously butchered.

Then again, even those who died a natural death at an inn would in all probability be earth-bound, the strong desire to communicate with far-away friends or relatives chaining them to the spot where sickness and death so unexpectedly overtook them.

Perhaps one of the best authenticated inn hauntings is that of a hostelry in Portsmouth called The White Garter. In the last century Mr. Samwell, an officer in the Royal Navy, had a very remarkable experience there. He was travelling by horse-coach from London to Portsmouth and had almost reached Guildford when an accident occurred to the coach which caused a long delay. Consequently he did not arrive in Portsmouth till long after midnight, when, to his consternation, he found every inn in the town full. After wandering about for a considerable time, he at length found himself in a very narrow thoroughfare on the outskirts of the town, leading to Portsea. He was threading his way carefully along it, for there had been much rain of late and the ditches on either side of the roadway were full of water, when to his intense satisfaction he suddenly saw a little way ahead of him a faint glare of light. Quickening his steps, he soon found that the light came from a low, white, straggling building, standing some yards back from the road. After he had rapped several times the door was answered by a woman who, not without a certain hesitation, agreed to let him have a bed and breakfast.

Always interested in and observant of women, Samwell took careful stock of his hostess while she was speaking, and noticed

that, although she was somewhat negligently dressed and was by no means as spick and span as most of the young women of his acquaintance in London, her clothes were nevertheless good and expensively made. This impressed him a good deal, because from her voice and appearance he had concluded that she belonged to the working classes. She was attractive in a dark, gipsy-like fashion, but there was something in her eyes that repelled him. She also exhibited a curious snake-like movement of the limbs when she walked, which struck him as singularly odd..

Nor did he like the look of the house. It was unusually dark and gloomy, and the silence that greeted him as he walked across the stone-flagged hall and mounted the broad black oak staircase at the heels of the woman, seemed peculiarly emphatic.

The room to which Samwell was conducted was on the first landing. It was low and irregularly built, full of deep, inlet cupboards and recesses, which the wavering, uncertain light of the rush candle that the woman handed him barely penetrated. Samwell, however, was far too tired and accustomed to dangers of all kinds to trouble much about his surroundings. He gave a hurried glance round to see that no one was in hiding, and then, shutting the door and locking it, flung off his clothes and got quickly into bed.

How long he slept he could not say, but he awoke with a violent start and with the peculiar sensation that he was no longer alone. Half opening his eyes, he saw something bright by his bedside. He at once sat bolt upright, and was astounded to see standing in front of him the tall figure of a man, wrapped in a shaggy overcoat, wearing a slouched hat, and holding a lantern in one hand.

For some seconds Samwell stared at the intruder, too dumbfounded to say anything, but his power of speech at length returning, he sternly demanded of the stranger who he was and how he dared venture into the room with permission. Not receiving any reply, and seeing the figure raise an arm as if about to strike him. Samwell sprang from the bed and

hit out with all his might. To his astonishment, however, his fist encountered no resistance, so that, overbalancing, he fell on the floor, and when he picked himself up and glanced around for his antagonist, he found he was alone.

Thoroughly alarmed, for he could only conclude that what he had seen was an apparition to warn him of some impending danger, Samwell resolved to get out of the place as quickly as possible. In rousing the landlady to pay her he would incur the danger of bringing on to the scene other inmates of the house, who would doubtless try to prevent him leaving, but, he reflected, he was very fit and strong, and though he possessed no firearms, he had with him a stout cudgel, which in his powerful grip would be a weapon of no mean order, and at any rate it would be better to be awake and prepared, and to die fighting, than to get back again into bed, go to sleep and probably be done to death without the opportunity of resisting.

Having thus made up his mind, Samwell opened his door cautiously and, walking on tiptoe across the landing, crept as noiselessly as possible downstairs, not pausing till he had gained the ground floor. He then quickly unbolted the front door and, having set it ajar, so that he could make a hurried exit if necessary, he called aloud to the landlady. Once or twice during his descent of the stairs he had fancied that he heard someone moving about, and he was constantly under the impression that he was being stealthily watched, so that it was hardly a surprise to him when the landlady, accompanied by a dark, squat, sinister-looking individual whom she addressed as 'Charlie', very shortly made her appearance, fully dressed.

As the pair of them came downstairs into the hall, Samwell distinctly caught the clicking of several door handles from somewhere overhead, and the very subdued whispering of harsh, uncouth voices. On his telling the landlady why he was leaving, both she and her companion pressed him to stay, declaring that what he had experienced could only have been a dream. There was something in their voices, however, which Samwell did not like, they sounded hollow and insincere; and

that, coupled with the expression in their eyes and general appearance, put him on his guard. He hurried from the inn and spent the rest of the night walking the sea front.

In the morning he recounted his experience to several of the townspeople, who told him that a mystery had for a long time hung over that particular inn, more than one stranger putting up there having mysteriously disappeared, whilst pedestrians, passing by it at night, had complained of hearing startling noises and seeing strange, unaccountable lights.

Sir John Carter, who was at that time Mayor of Portsmouth, was induced to take the matter up, but when the authorities went to the house it was found that the proprietors had decamped. The affair was then allowed to drop and, according to report, the premises were shortly afterwards pulled down, when a number of remains, unmistakably human, in all stages of decomposition, were found under the flooring and in the back garden.

Another house, also a hostelry, was soon erected on the same site, but despite an altogether different signboard, this inn was never alluded to locally save by the familiar name of The White Garter; and the sinister reputation which had been associated with the former building was to a certain extent speedily acquired by the new one. Horses passing by its entrance late at night were said to shy at strange and inexplicable shadows that silently emerged from the gateway and took up their stand by the wayside, whilst cries and groans, and occasionally sounds of frenzied, hurried digging, were only too plainly heard coming from the ground in the rear.

The disturbances this time, however, were entirely attributed to the supernatural, as the owners of the establishment were highly esteemed people who ran the house on most excellent lines, and whose conduct of it seemed above suspicion. Things went on in this way for some years, and then a story got into circulation which once again brought the house into bad repute and led to another speedy change, both of proprietorship and signboard.

A Mr. Harrison, on accepting an appointment in the Naval

Dockyard, left his home in London and journeyed to Portsmouth with the intention of taking up his new duties without delay. On his arrival in the town he set to work at once to look for lodgings, and, finding every apartment house in the place full, he finally succeeded in getting a room at the White Garter Hotel. The landlady had only a double-bedded room left, and this she did not wish to let to a single person. However, when Harrison offered to pay the double fee she somewhat reluctantly consented, and he engaged the room, stipulating that he should have it to himself and not share it with another man, as she had at first suggested.

Having a good many letters to get off by the night mail, it was late before he turned in, and, being of a somewhat shrewd and cautious disposition, and remembering that Portsmouth was said to be the happy hunting ground of rogues of all kinds, he first of all carefully locked his door. He then undressed hastily, for the room was none too warm, blew out the light and scrambled into bed. Harrison went to sleep almost immediately, to be aroused about two o'clock by a curious moaning sound from somewhere beneath his window. Unable to make out what it could be, he was about to get up to look when his eyes fell on the spare bed by his side, and he received a violent shock. Confronting him, in a half-sitting, half-lying posture, was a man. The moonlight being very strong and fully focused on the bed, every detail in the stranger's appearance stood out with the most startling distinctness. He was a young fellow, to judge from his jet black hair and whiskers, evidently in the prime of life, but his head was bent low and consequently Harrison could not see his features. He was only partially undressed, having his trousers, shirt and vest still on, and his attitude suggested he was fast asleep.

At first Harrison, who was furious at the trick his landlady had played on him, contemplated rousing the stranger and telling him to leave the room instantly, but the man kept so quiet that, on second thoughts, Harrison decided to leave him alone and say nothing till morning. Thus resolved, he lay down again in bed, and was soon fast asleep.

This time Harrison slept undisturbed, and did not wake till a neighbouring church clock informed him it was seven o'clock. The room was then aglow with sunshine, and the hum of voices in the yard and grounds outside announced the fact that the day's work had already begun. Harrison looked at the bed alongside his. The semi-dressed individual, whom he now took to be a sailor, was still in the same position, asleep, but Harrison saw with a thrill that whereas there had been nothing on the man's head before, it was now swathed in bandages. What puzzled him most, however, was to think how the stranger could have got into the room, as the door was still locked on the inside; the only window was bolted, and there was no other apparent entrance.

Still pondering over this Harrison slowly began to dress, and, fetching in the hot water which the maid had left at the door, he had his shave. This done he turned away from the dressing-table, and, his glance travelling in the direction of the two beds, he saw to his intense surprise that the sailor was no longer in the room. Utterly mystified as to how the man could have left without his either seeing or hearing him, and feeling for the first time since his arrival in the house a sensation closely akin to fear, Harrison hurriedly completed his toilet and hastened downstairs. After he had finished his breakfast he summoned the landlady, and angrily demanded what she meant by breaking her promise to him and letting someone share his room.

'Share your room, sir!' she cried. 'Whatever are you talking about? There was no one in your room last night but yourself, and you know that as well as I do.'

'No, I don't,' Harrison retorted furiously. 'Here, take your money, but you will never catch me crossing your threshold again.' And, throwing the money to her, he clapped on his hat and was stalking out of the house when a curious, half-frightened look on her face made him pause.

'It must have been "Whiskers" you saw, sir,' she said faintly. 'I feared he would never rest.'

'What the deuce do you mean?' Harrison remarked, his curiosity now thoroughly aroused.

'Tell me,' the landlady replied, 'had the man who stayed in your room all night very black hair and whiskers?'

'Nothing could have been blacker,' was the response.

'And was he dressed as a sailor?'

Harrison nodded.

'Well, then,' the landlady observed emphatically, 'that was no man but a ghost, and I might as well make a clean breast of it. Some days ago we had a party of sailors staying here, and two of them, one a young fellow with curly black hair and whiskers, the other a much older man going bald, occupied your room. They sat up very late drinking and playing cards, and the bald-headed man accused "Whiskers", as we called him, of cheating. There was a fight, and "Whiskers" received a blow on the head from a glass bottle. Of course I did all I could for him, but he died before morning in the bed alongside the one you slept in. I ought, of course, to have told the authorities, but the bald-headed man begged me so hard not to do so, as it would mean for certain a charge of manslaughter against him, that I kept quiet—you see, I had the reputation of my house to think of too, and in the end they, the bald-headed fellow and his mates, secretly buried "Whiskers", with my sanction in the garden.'

'The servants, I believe, knew nothing of what had occurred, but the day before yesterday Polly, one of the chambermaids, came to me with a scared face and told me she had seen "Whiskers" looking out of the window of the room he had slept in, with something very queer fastened round his head. I told her it was sheer fancy and that she must have been dreaming, but now I know that "Whiskers" does really haunt the place, and if the story leaks out I shall be ruined.'

Not wholly convinced that the woman was speaking the truth, Harrison went away fully intending to report the matter to the local police, but on arriving at the dockyard he found that his appointment there had been cancelled; another post had been allotted to him in the Colonies and he was requested

to leave for abroad almost immediately. In these circumstances he could do nothing but make a few hurried arrangements for his departure, and it was not until his return to Portsmouth several years later that he thought again at all seriously of the strange adventure he had had in the double-bedded room at the old inn.

Thinking there must be some mystery attached to the place, he set out to look for The White Garter, and, arriving at the well-remembered spot, found a new signboard hanging out where the old one had been. The house, so he was told, had been partly pulled down and rebuilt, and was now under a different name and an entirely new management.

Years have elapsed since then but, if there is any truth in rumour, the place is still in existence and still badly haunted.

Taunton and York both have old inns with certain rooms said to be haunted by vicious ghosts, people who have spent the night in them undergoing all the painful sensations of choking and strangulation. Bristol has an hotel with an underground passage connecting it to a house on the other side of the road, and this passage was long reputed to be haunted by strange-coloured lights flitting to and fro and the figure of a woman with a very white face, and clad in garments which were very tattered and torn. She was seen usually peering round corners with a grim and evil smile.

In the Chilterns there is an inn, once a farmhouse, that stands close beside crossroads, and there all manner of startling things are said to happen periodically. For years the place may go unmolested by any kind of supernatural disturbance, and then, quite suddenly, the hauntings may break out and continue night after night for weeks and sometimes months. One of the phenomena alleged to occur there is the sound of a loud grunting and snuffling which is heard about midnight, coming from waste ground behind the building. People have, it is said, occasionally gone out to ascertain the cause of these strange sounds, and all who have done so invariably come back declaring, with terrified faces, that they have seen a herd of enormous black hogs gnawing and tearing at some white

and ghastly-looking object on the ground. However, the moment any attempt is made to interfere with these animals, they instantly and inexplicably disappear.

A suggested explanation of this phenomenon is that, many years ago, a former proprietress of the place, tiring of her husband, who was a great deal older than herself, and desiring to marry someone else, gave him drugged wine to drink and then, carrying him into the pig pen, left him there for the voracious animals to eat.

Yet another ghostly manifestation witnessed outside the inn is that of a shrouded figure which is from time to time seen, on nights when the moon is full, suspended to a phantom gibbet at the junction of the four roads. On these occasions guests in the inn have been awakened by the rattling of chains, and on looking out of their windows have seen the form dangling gently to and fro in the still night air. Once someone fetched a shotgun and fired at it repeatedly, but with no effect; for it still continued its slow and solemn oscillations, vanishing only at dawn.

There is still one more ghostly phenomenon apparently attached to the place, and that a white face with long, straggling locks of grey hair blowing all around it, and big dark eyes full of the most heartrending despair. It is generally seen at twilight, and always peering in at one of the windows on the ground floor. As a rule, those who have seen it have been far too terrified to attempt to address it; but on the rare occasions when people have summoned up the courage to speak, it has invariably vanished instantaneously without making any kind of response whatever.

Of this phenomenon there is no explanation at all. Possibly the spirit may be that of some murderer or suicide buried at the crossroads, and chained to the spot through the enormity of his or her vices.

In London there are a number of hotels reputed to be haunted. There is one, for instance, in a quiet side-street not far from Southampton Row, where guests have been aroused about two o'clock in the morning by the mad galloping of

horses. The sounds come from very far off in the first instance, and, growing gradually louder and louder, eventually seem to be actually in the house itself, and so close to the beds of the listeners that they can actually feel the rush of wind in their faces as the phantom steeds tear wildly past them. Nothing, however, that I know of, has ever been seen there.

Lastly, there is a hotel close to the Strand where the haunting is of a more remarkable nature. A man staying there not long ago awoke in the night feeling a cold air blowing up from beneath him all around his bed, and with the sensation that he was lying suspended over a funnel-shaped pit of the most prodigious depth and terrifying appearance. It was all so absolutely realistic—he could even hear the steady drip, drip of the water from the reeking earthen sides, and detect the faint smell of fungus and decaying vegetable matter peculiar to such places—that the sweat burst out all over him and he clung on to the mattress in an agony of terror till the morning.

He spoke to the hotel proprietor about it, and finally succeeded in extracting an admission from his host that the experience he had had in the room was by no means an uncommon one, nearly everyone who slept there at that time of the year complaining of the same sensations. The proprietor could only account for it by the rumour that where the hotel now stood there had once been a pit into which the dead, and sometimes the living too, were flung indiscriminately during the Great Plague.

## THE NUN OF DIGBY COURT

RALPH MARLOW received a letter one morning in December, 1820, from his friend Dick Holloway. 'Dear Ralph,' Holloway wrote, 'If you are not fixed for Christmas stay with me at Digby Court in Warwickshire. I have inherited the house and lands from my great-uncle Sir Arthur Holloway but I have never been there. Do come.'

As it happened Marlow had not fixed on anywhere to spend Christmas, so he was glad to accept the invitation. He and Holloway were old Harrow boys and had shared the same study there.

He packed his portmanteau and took a hackney coach to the Peacock Inn at St. Pancras, where he got a seat in the stage-coach for Warwick. On arriving at Warwick he found a carriage waiting for him, and was driven to Digby Court. A drive through an avenue of stately old trees led to the house, a long building of two storeys at each end of which was a gabled tower covered with ivy. Fronting the house was an extensive lawn, and at the end of this a lake bordered by trees and bushes.

On entering the house Marlow was led by Mrs. Hay, the elderly caretaker, across a wide hall, overlooked by a gallery connecting the East and West wings. A broad oak staircase led from the hall to the gallery.

A good supper was laid for him in the dining-room, the walls of which were adorned with portraits of the Holloways. Marlow did full justice to it, for the drive along the frost laden high-road had made him very hungry. Mrs. Hay asked if there was anything she could do for him before he went to bed, and then left the house. She lived at the park lodge, and seemed in a hurry to get back to it. Holloway was not to come till the next day. Marlow sat before the cheerful wood fire in

the dining-room for some time before he went to bed. He then experienced his first shock.

As he was ascending the staircase to his room a figure covered with what looked like wool rushed past him, leaving behind it a dreadful smell, like that of a charnel house. What the figure was, whether male or female, or anything at all human he could not tell, and it was only with a desperate effort that he recovered from the fright that the thing gave him, and continued to ascend the stairs.

His room was in a corridor in the East wing, and there he found a bright fire in the wide, old-world grate. He locked the door, sat before the fire for some minutes, and then got into bed, sleeping till Mrs. Hay brought him a cup of tea in the morning. He did not mention his experience to her.

Holloway and a party of people, with servants and luggage, arrived at noon. A more merry party had seldom, if ever, sat down to lunch. They then spent the afternoon wandering about the house and grounds.

Marlow, Holloway and some of the guests were approaching the lake along a path flanked on either side by bushes when a woman in the garb of a nun passed quickly by them.

'A nun!' Holloway exclaimed. 'How did she get here, I wonder? There is no convent near here.'

They watched her receding form till it vanished round a bend in the path. When they returned to the house Mrs. Hay was still there and Holloway asked the caretaker who the nun was. Looking very taken back and nervous she said, 'I don't know, sir. I have never seen a nun here.'

After supper and coffee in the drawing-room, the women chatted for a while, and then went to bed. When they had gone the men sat in the big hall, smoking and drinking. It was close on twelve o'clock when one of them uttered an exclamation of surprise, and pointed to the gallery. Standing in it were three people, two men and a woman. They appeared to be talking but made no sound. Suddenly a nun rushed into the gallery and, falling on her knees in front of the trio, raised her hands in a supplicating gesture. Her face was that of a

long buried corpse, and a ghastly stench accompanied her. Appalled by her appearance and the smell the men in the hall stared in spellbound silence at the gallery. They did not speak or stir until as suddenly as they had appeared the phantom figures vanished.

'My God! Horrible! Ghastly! What does it mean? Don't tell the ladies,' were the exclamations that succeeded the disappearance of the apparitions.

'I'm dashed if I know what it means,' Holloway said. 'I had no idea this place was haunted. My great-uncle never complained of ghosts.'

They kept very near one another when they went to bed.

In the morning two of the women declared that nothing would induce them to stay another hour in the house; they had been visited by a dreadful figure covered with wool, and smelling horribly, in the night, and had been obliged to sit huddled close together in the corridor for a time.

Their departure saw the departure of all the women and some of the men; those that remained out of bravado saw the same phantoms again that night.

All the servants having panicked and left, Holloway, Marlow, and the other men who had stayed left too, and Digby Court was abandoned to cobwebs, stillness and ghosts.

## THE PHANTOM LADY OF BERRY POMEROY

ROMANTICALLY situated amid some of the most beautiful scenery in Devon, the picturesque ruins of Berry Pomeroy Castle, near Totnes, date to two main periods. The older part is said to have been built by Ralph de Poerai (Pomeroi), one of the followers of William I, who for his valour in battle was given much land in the vicinity of the river Dart. The later portion of the ruins date from the mid-sixteenth century, when the estate of Berry Pomeroy, comprising the village of that name, castle premises and territory passed into the possession of the Duke of Somerset, who shortly afterwards became Lord Protector.

Either before or during the feudal wars the castle was made into a fortress, considered practically impregnable because of its standing on an eminence, with one of its sides on the brink of a cliff, and the only approach to it being through a wood, which in those days was very dense and extensive.

There is little doubt that during its long history many a dark and tragic incident was enacted within its massive and grim walls.

One violent scene that lived long in the memory of those who witnessed it occurred towards the latter part of the reign of Richard I. That monarch having learned, on his return from captivity, that Henry de Pomeroi, lineal descendant of Ralph de Pomeroi, founder of the castle, had been disloyal to him, having sided with Prince John against him, ordered his arrest. On the approach of the king's pursuivants, de Pomeroi, rather than surrender, mounted his favourite charger and, with a shout of defiance, made it leap from the battlement of the castle into the gorge beneath.

Henry's is one of the ghosts rumoured to haunt, periodically, the castle ruins and the nearby banks of the river Dart.

The castle remained in possession of the de Pomeroi family

from the days of the Conqueror to about the year 1549, when the last of its owners was accused of taking part in a rebellion against the Government, and only saved his life by making over his estate to the wily Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset. The castle was dismantled during the Civil Wars of the seventeenth century but was restored to all its pristine splendour by Sir Edward Seymour in the reign of James II. After his death it fell into a state of decay, the process of destruction being quickened, so it has been asserted, by a thunderstorm of the most unparalleled violence.

The more widely known of the castle hauntings concern either two phantom ladies, or, if only one, an apparition whose purpose and significance is not always the same. In her one role she is merely the presager of death to a member of any family intimately associated or connected with the castle, while in her other role she deliberately lures to death or serious accident any person who has the misfortune to see her.

At the International Club for Psychical Research in 1913 Mr. Taylor, an elderly member of the club, related an authentic story told him in his youth by a Mrs. King of Torquay. Mrs. King said that her brother, who was an officer in a line regiment, while spending his leave at home, went one day to Berry Pomeroy village to see the castle. Not believing in ghosts he paid no attention to the rumour he had heard of the castle being haunted. Having obtained the keys, on payment of a small gratuity to the lodge-keeper, he was wandering about the ruins, when he saw a young and beautiful girl, wearing a very becoming albeit somewhat quaint costume, beckoning to him, as if in distress, from the summit of one of the lofty, ivy-clad walls.

Supposing she was afraid to move lest she should fall, and wondering who she was and how she got there, he searched for a means to get to her, and, having found what appeared to be the only way, he had nearly reached her when the masonry under his feet subsided, and it was only by a miracle that he saved himself from plunging to a great depth. Clinging

desperately to a narrow ledge he was all but spent when luckily he was seen and rescued.

On mentioning the lovely damsel and her predicament he was informed that there was no need to worry about her since she was not of this world but the much dreaded phantom of a long defunct member of the Pomeroy family, who took a fiendish delight in luring people, especially men, to their destruction.

Mrs. King's story of the haunting of Berry Pomeroy Castle by this phantom is one of many told of the apparition. Regarding the death presaging phantom, the following account is taken from the memoirs of the eminent physician, Sir Walter Farquhar.

When Sir Walter was a general practitioner in Torquay, he was summoned one day to the wife of the Steward of Berry Pomeroy Castle, who was seriously ill. On arriving at the castle, a portion of which was occupied, he was shown into a gloomy room, a curious feature of which was an old staircase in one corner leading to an apartment overhead.

He was becoming impatient at being kept waiting when the door opened and a woman entered. Owing to the dull weather and the window being stained the light was so poor that he could not see the woman's face very distinctly, but he got the impression that she was young and good looking, and that her dress was of some very rich material. Her bracelets jingled as she walked across the floor and the jewels in her ears and on her breast emitted a faint glow.

Without seeming to notice Dr. Farquhar she made for the staircase, halted at the foot of it, as if hesitating to go on, and then slowly began to ascend. When she was nearly at the top she again paused and looked down and round at the doctor. At that moment the sky seemed to brighten and, the light from the window over the stairs focusing on her face, she was then for the first time fully revealed to Dr. Farquhar. She was strikingly beautiful but her attractiveness was in a large measure marred by the reflection in her features of the obvious

struggle that was taking place within her, a struggle between passions of the most vicious kind and utter despair.

That she belonged to a wealthy and highly aristocratic class was depicted in the delicate moulding of all her lineaments, in the exquisite shape of her hands, with their long tapering fingers, in the richness of her dress and in her costly jewellery. Immeasurably shocked but horribly fascinated, Dr. Farquhar stood rooted to the floor, wholly unable to tear his gaze from her face, so wicked and so pitifully despairing.

There was an indescribable eeriness about her that infected the atmosphere of the room, and he felt, as he looked at her, that he was seeing a soul damned without a particle of hope.

Continuing her ascent the woman vanished from view overhead. Sorely perplexed and not a little jarred the doctor was debating in his mind who or what she could have been when he was summoned to the bedside of his patient.

He visited the patient again the following morning and was pleased to find a great improvement in her. After he had left her and was alone for a few minutes with the Steward, he told the latter about his strange experience in the castle the previous day. To his consternation the Steward was much upset. 'I would rather anything had happened but that,' the Steward exclaimed, and on Dr. Farquhar asking what he meant, the man told him that the beautiful figure he had seen on the staircase was not of flesh and blood but the ghost of the daughter of a long ago Pomeroy owner of the castle, doomed for many sins and crime, one of which was the murder of her child, the outcome of an incestuous intercourse, to haunt the castle, always appearing in that particular room prior to the death of someone living in the building.

'The last time she was seen here,' the Steward said, 'was the day my son was drowned, and her appearance to you yesterday can only mean one thing, the death of my poor wife.'

Dr. Farquhar told him there was really no need for alarm as his wife was no longer in any danger. The Steward, however, refused to be comforted; and that very day, a few hours after the doctor's visit, his wife died.

Many years later, when Dr. Farquhar, no longer a general practitioner, was living in London and had achieved fame in his profession, a woman came to see him one day about her sister who, she said, was becoming very ill over nothing more than a persisting hallucination. The woman said that she, her brother and sister, while staying a few weeks in Torquay, had driven one morning to Berry Pomeroy to see the castle. While she and her brother were in conversation with the lodge-keeper her sister was alone in the room with the corner staircase, and when they returned to her they found her in a very agitated state. The sister declared that a woman had passed through the room, wringing her hands and with an expression on her lovely face that she would never forget.

'We laughed at my sister,' the woman said, 'and told her she must have been dreaming, but she persisted, and still persists that she saw such a person.'

'Do you know if anyone closely associated with the castle died soon after your visit to it?' Dr. Farquhar asked.

'The Steward died the same day,' his caller said.

'Your sister is suffering from no hallucination,' Dr. Farquhar exclaimed, 'for I, too, saw that woman.' He then described his experience in the room with the corner staircase, expressing his wish to see the sister. 'Whatever you do,' he added, 'never again ridicule her or cast any doubt on what she told you.'

The following day the woman's sister came to him as a patient, and under his treatment she rapidly got well.

## THE HAUNTING OF ST. GILES

HOSPITALS, like gaols, are sometimes haunted. Bethesda is haunted by the ghost of a girl, Rebecca, and a hospital near Buckingham Palace Road, London, by an eerie black mist which is seen in one of the wards before a death; but no hospital has been so badly haunted as a hospital near Edinburgh, which we must call 'St. Giles'.

My old schoolfellow Bruce Carnegie met with an accident some years ago in Edinburgh, which necessitated his going to St. Giles. He was put in Ward D, and had a cubicle to himself.

The third night he was lying in bed in a state of semi-wakefulness when two nurses entered the room with a moveable couch. The older of the nurses gave him an injection. They then put him on the couch and took him to a room where there were two doctors in white hoods and white robes—their faces muffled. One of them bent over him. Carnegie sensed that it was a man with a dark beard and dark, gleaming eyes full of fiendish hatred. The man was intent of doing something to him.

'Why don't you begin?' he found himself asking.

'It's all over,' a voice then said, and Carnegie was conscious of the most excruciating pain. He asked for something to relieve it, and the nurse gave him a pill. He asked for another, but she shook her head—'I cannot give you more.'

'Oh, hell, I can't bear it,' he pleaded. 'You must,' she said. 'Be patient.'

Her voice weakened and faded away. His brain cleared. He recognized his surroundings—the cubicle. He was still in it. The pain had ceased but he retained a vivid, none too pleasant recollection of it.

He later spoke about the incident to one of the nurses, and she asked, 'Was this in Ward D?'

'Yes,' Carnegie told her.

'I thought it was,' she said.

He asked her why, but she would not tell him, and he did not find out until he had left St. Giles. He then heard that Ward D in the hospital was well known to be haunted.

He discovered that about twelve years before he went to St. Giles there were two doctors, Mackie and McGowan, an anaesthetist. Both men were in love with Hilda Reid, a very pretty, petite blonde. They had been friends but rivalry made them foes. When Mackie was knocked down by a car and seriously injured, he was put in Ward D at St. Giles, and an important operation was found to be necessary. A surgeon in the hospital named Warren undertook it. McGowan administered the anaesthetic. He overdid it purposely and deliberately murdered Mackie—the perfect crime. He then married Hilda Reid and left St. Giles with her.

It was after McGowan's death—he met with a fatal accident several days after his marriage—that all came out, and that Ward D, which Mackie had occupied, began to be haunted.

### THE PHANTOM TRUMPETER OF FYVIE

FEW castles have figured as often in the ghost-lore of Scotland as Fyvie Castle in Aberdeenshire. Of the ancient Scottish baronial type of architecture, it was built during the latter part of the fourteenth century, probably on the site of a much earlier castle, in a wooded valley encircled by undulating hills.

It passed eventually into the possession of Sir Henry Preston of Craigmillar, who distinguished himself at the battle of Otterburn. Sir Henry, in order to enlarge his domain, demolished a neighbouring monastery and used the stones he took from it to add a tower, known afterwards as the Preston, to Fyvie Castle. During the transference of the stones from the monastery ruins to the castle three of them fell into the nearby river.

It was about this time that Thomas the Rhymer, Scotland's most prolific prophet and curser, came to the castle one day and solicited a night's shelter. Sir Henry would not admit him, and had the great gate of the castle shut in his face. From all accounts Thomas was very hasty tempered and quick to take offence. Full of indignation at being treated so inhospitably he stood in front of the castle and pronounced one of the curses for which he was so renowned.

A violent storm of rain and wind burst over the castle and grounds while Thomas was speaking, but round the spot where he stood there was a dead calm and the ground remained perfectly dry. This was regarded by the awed spectators as sure proof that Thomas was under supernatural protection and that no harm would or could befall him.

Thomas declared that until the three stones had been recovered the Fyvie property would never descend in the direct line for more than two generations.

Two of the stones were recovered, but the third was never found. Owing to a quantity of moisture being constantly found

on one of the recovered stones, no matter how dry and warm the weather, the castle was sometimes styled the Castle of the Weeping Stone, weeping on account of the missing stone.

The curse Thomas pronounced is said to have worked until comparatively recent times.

Sir Henry Preston had only one child, a girl. She married a Meldrum, and on Sir Henry's death Fyvie passed into the possession of the Meldrum family. They did not own it long, for in 1596 they sold it to Alexander Seton, third son of George, Sixth Lord Seton. He was created Lord Fyvie and Earl of Dunfermline.

The Setons had an exceptionally honourable family history and were renowned for their loyalty to their sovereign, but, like Sir Henry Preston and the Meldrums, they would seem to have been under some kind of a blight while they remained in Fyvie Castle. This was believed to be owing to Thomas the Rhymer's curse.

The estate was forfeited when the fourth Lord Fyvie espoused the Jacobite cause and fought for the old Pretender. It was sold in 1726 to William, the Second Earl of Aberdeen, who bequeathed it to his son by his third wife, Lady Anne Gordon, sister of Lord Lewis Gordon. I understand that their descendants in the direct line died out some years ago.

There would seem to be some doubt as to when the traditional haunting of Fyvie Castle by the famous Phantom Trumpeter actually began, though it was during the eighteenth century. There are several versions of the tragic happenings that are popularly thought to have occasioned the haunting.

According to one of these versions, Andrew Lammie, a trumpeter in the service of the then owner of Fyvie, fell in love with Agnes Smith, daughter of a well-to-do local miller. Owing to the parents of Agnes strongly disapproving of her marrying a poor trumpeter, she and her lover used to meet clandestinely.

Unfortunately for Andrew he had a formidable rival in the Laird of Fyvie, who wanted Agnes for his mistress. The Laird, who was informed of the clandestine meetings of the lovers,

had Andrew seized, taken on board a ship and transported as a slave to the West Indies.

After several years Andrew luckily effected his escape and came back to Scotland. He at once sought Agnes, but was told she had died of a broken heart. The shock of her death proved too much for Andrew in his enfeebled state of health and he died too. On his death bed he cursed the Laird of Fyvie and swore that always before the death of a Gordon of Fyvie his trumpet would be heard either within or immediately without the castle walls.

According to another version of the story, the parents of Agnes Smith, angry with her for loving Andrew Lammie and rejecting the advances of the Laird of Fyvie, caused her death. But in spite of the harsh measures adopted by them, she put love and poverty before wealth and position and ever remained faithful to her poor despised sweetheart.

The story of her love for Andrew is immortalized in the well known Aberdeenshire ballad, 'Mill O' Tifty's Annie'. The poet has substituted the name Annie for that of her real name, Agnes. The following verses are taken from the ballad:

'Fyvie lands lie braid and wide.  
And oh, but they be bonny!  
But I wadna gie my ain true-love  
For a' the lands in Fyvie.  
'But mak my bed and lay me down,  
And tarn my face to Fyvie  
That I may see before I die,  
My bonny Andrew Lammie.  
They made her bed, and laid her down,  
And turned her face to Fyvie  
She gave a groan, and died or morn,  
She ne'er saw Andrew Lammie.  
The Laird of Fyvie he went hame,  
And he was sad and sorry;  
Says 'The bonniest lass O' the country-side  
Has died for Andrew Lammie.'

Oh, Andrew's gane to the house-top  
 O' the bonny house O' Fyvie;  
 He's blawn his horn baith loud and shrill  
 O'er the lowland lass of Fyvie.  
 'Love pines away, loved wines away,  
 Love—love decays the body;  
 For the love O' thee, now I maun dee;  
 I come, my bonny Annie.'

And with those words he died.

A stone effigy on the summit of one of the castle's turrets is thought to represent Andrew Lammie, whose trumpet points in the direction of a monument erected in Fyvie kirk-yard in memory of Agnes Smith.

It was soon after the death of Andrew Lammie that the haunting of Fyvie by a phantom believed to be his is said to have begun. For many years before the death of a Gordon of Fyvie the harrowing blast of a trumpet was heard in the dead of night, and the tall, menacing, shadowy figure of a man clad in a picturesque tartan was seen either within the castle walls or in close proximity to them.

Andrew's ghost was not, however, the only phantom that periodically visited Fyvie Castle. The ghost of a lady wearing a green dress was rumoured to appear at various times.

Issuing from a room known as the Haunted Chamber, she walked or rather glided through the winding passages and panelled rooms, ascending and descending the winding staircase, and, returning to the Haunted Chamber, disappeared in it with alarming abruptness. Who she was in her lifetime is not definitely known.

QUEER, inexplicable things occasionally happen in the hunting field. They happened on the famous Dingborough Hunt. My friend Harry Martin, when he was living in Blankshire, joined the Dingborough. Harry, who was not quite thirty, held a commission in the Yeomanry, and though a good rider, was inclined to be a little too risky at times.

It was when he was with the hounds one day in February that a strange thing happened.

The pack met at Gilsby. It was fine when they started, but after they had run a fox down it became foggy, and they decided not to go on. One by one all the members of the hunt rode off, and Martin found himself alone. In clear weather he would not have minded, but in a fog and in a locality he did not know too well, he anticipated difficulty in getting home—a distance of twelve miles or more.

He was riding along disconsolate but trying to be cheerful, when he saw a little way ahead of him, riding in the same direction, a misty figure on a black or dark horse. He followed the rider, glad to have a companion in distress. By degrees the fog cleared, until he was able to see the rider very distinctly. It was a woman, a brunette, but to his surprise she was dressed in the picturesque costume of ages past.

Wondering who on earth she could be in such outlandish clothes he called to her, but there was no reply. Looking around him he could not see any familiar objects, and he realized with no little annoyance that he had lost his way. On and on rode the woman ahead; he shouted, and she must have heard him, but she still made no response, never once turning her head.

An eerie feeling came over him. She did not seem real, and the stillness and sense of isolation was so acute.

It was growing dusk. The woman quickened her speed, and Martin did the same, but without getting any nearer to her—always they were the same distance apart. Ahead of him the

ground sloped, and the speed of both riders increased. Martin tried to rein his horse in but could not, it was as if the other horse magnetized it.

They were tearing now, the wind whirring in his ears, when ahead of them he saw to his horror a gaping pit. The woman rode straight for it. On reaching it she looked round, and for the first time he saw her face—white and lovely. She smiled at him, waved, and, signalling him to follow, leaped on horseback into the yawning chasm.

With a frantic effort he tore himself free of the saddle and crashed to the ground as his horse, never pausing, plunged madly forward over the brink, into the depths below. Dazed, Martin picked himself up—a few more feet and he would have been over the edge. He peered down but could see nothing—only blackness. He hurried away, and after some hours finally got to his destination, more dead than alive.

His story awoke interest, and he learned an explanation of what he had experienced. The locality of the pit was traditionally reputed to be haunted.

In the seventeenth century, living in the vicinity of the Dingborough Hunt were the Leeches, a new rich family. They had only very recently come to that part of the country. They had one child, Emily, a dark haired beauty, and among her many admirers was Robert Hunt, the only son of a widow. Robert, an unsophisticated youth of twenty, first saw Emily at a meet of the Dingborough, and fell violently in love with her. She encouraged his affections; his country manners and rawness amused her. But he was just her plaything, someone with whom to pass the idle moments till Lord Hartley, the man she wished to marry, returned from abroad. When he did, she gave the cold shoulder to Robert, and laughed in his face when he stammered that he loved her.

Bitterly grieved, Robert threw himself into the pit and was fatally injured. Before he died he cursed Emily, and declared that she would haunt the locality of the pit till Doomsday.

It was her ghost that Harry Martin must have seen; an apparition as beautiful as she was evil.

## MY NIGHT IN OLD WHITTLEBURY FOREST

WHEN about to begin one of my nocturnal investigations I am not infrequently asked if I am feeling psychic—if I feel that I may see or hear something supernatural, or sense something hypernormal in the atmosphere of the place. Well, on the Thursday night of my arrival at Black House, some thirty miles from Northampton, I neither felt or sensed anything untoward.

The weather conditions, however, struck me as being distinctly favourable for a psychic manifestation of some kind. In my experiences in a variety of climates I have found that it is on nights when the weather is disturbed, as for example, when there is a thunderstorm, or it is very windy and raining hard, or at the other extreme when it is exceptionally fine and still, and the moon is full, that ghostly phenomena are most likely to occur. Also, I believe ghostly manifestations are largely dependent on the time of year, the late summer and early autumn being rather more conducive to them than any other period. Hence the conditions on that September night at Black House, when a strong wind moaned and whistled through the tree tops and set all the windows and doors jarring, were certainly in favour of my visit.

I had been told that the phantom of a man had been seen in various parts of the house, sometimes smoking a phantom pipe, when the smell of tobacco was distinctly noticeable, but beyond that I had heard little or nothing; consequently no stories about the place were running in my mind and I could rule out all possibility of suggestion.

Soon after my arrival at the house, while my two hostesses stood talking with my companions from the local newspaper, I got my first impressions. I suddenly sensed very strongly the presence of oak trees and stags. I mentioned this and learned for the first time that the house stood on ground that had once

formed part of old Whittlebury Forest, which had abounded in oak trees and harboured many stags.

As the night was well advanced we began our sitting.

None of us being orthodox spiritualists we did not form a circle but individually found the first convenient seat. We sat in darkness and in silence. The outdoor conditions kept favourable; every now and then gusts of wind howled like a host of lost souls round and round the house.

Suddenly I was conscious of a curious change in the atmosphere of the room. A new element seemed to have entered it and intermingled with it, one that was very eerie. I was trying to diagnose this change when I felt a strong psychic current sweep past me in the direction of the door leading into the garden, close to which one of our hostesses, Miss H, was sitting. The change in the atmosphere at once became clearer; there was with us some elemental presence, something of the semi-human, semi-animal species that is associated with trees and forests.

At my request, one of our party had brought a dog with him, as dogs, in my opinion, are sure psychic barometers, invariably making some kind of demonstration when anything supernatural is at hand. My companion's dog now started to bark aggressively, as if there was something near at hand that it very strongly resented.

Through the window overlooking the front garden facing me I saw a leadenish blue light, or rather glow. It lasted a few seconds then gradually faded away. Other members of the party also saw luminary phenomena, but through a glass door that led to another part of the house. Some of these lights were in the form of a crescent and others a triangle.

During the whole time that these phenomena were manifesting intense excitement prevailed, a general thrill shared not only by my friend's dog but by several dogs belonging to the house, and located in various parts of it, for one and all began to bark savagely. When the lights eventually disappeared and the dogs became silent we relit the lamps.

We then related our respective experiences. Some of us

had heard ghostly footsteps moving about the premises, others had heard uncanny whistling; while there were those who had seen and heard nothing. I asked Miss H if she had been conscious of the psychic current that had swept past me, and she said she had. She had felt something very unusual and unpleasant suddenly approach her. She was quite sure that it was not the spirit of the smoker; she had seen him in the room directly afterwards but he was friendly. She thought that the phenomenon must be one of the numerous psychic entities that sometimes haunted the immediate vicinity of the house but which rarely entered it.

One of the other sitters told me afterwards that she was holding one of Miss H's hands at the time and could feel Miss H trembling violently.

After a short interval we sat in the darkness again. This time I, too, heard the uncanny whistling; it was just as if someone was standing by the window whistling to an animal and it was followed by the sound of faraway horse's hooves. The sounds drew rapidly nearer and seemed to pass through the room, dying gradually away in the distance. Directly afterwards I heard mutterings and whisperings. Then silence.

After a time Miss H relit the lamp and asked if anyone had heard the sounds of a horse in the room. I and several others told her that we had. She then informed us that she and Miss D had often heard the sounds of a horse tearing through the room, always at the same hour, namely two o'clock in the morning, the very time I had heard the sounds.

The sitting, which ended as dawn broke, had been successful in that it corroborated the statement of the two women, Miss H and Miss D, that Black House was really haunted. I afterwards looked up the history and traditions relative to Whittlebury Forest and found that the locality has throughout long centuries borne the reputation of being haunted.

One of the apparitions is that of a headless horseman, whose appearance is regarded as a portent of misfortune, even death. Happily no one saw the horseman that night. It is said to be

more often seen in the lanes and fields in the neighbourhood of Black House.

A phantom lady is also said to haunt the site of old Whittlebury Forest as a punishment for her cruel treatment of one of her lovers. She is nocturnally hunted by a phantom huntsman and a pack of spectral hounds. It is this particular haunting that is said to have suggested to Dryden his poem of *Theodore and Honoria*.

## THE FOURTH TREE IN THE AVENUE

ONE autumn evening four men sat in a room in a house in the Midlands. They were all members of a psychical research society, and among them was my friend Dr. Leonard Smyth. All they knew about the house was that it was rumoured to be badly haunted; they knew nothing specific.

It was eleven o'clock when they began the sitting, and it was not until nearly one o'clock that anything occurred. Smyth's dog Prince growled, and drew close to his master. A board in the room creaked and quivered, and there was a swelling on the floor.

The swelling grew and presently an aperture appeared. The four men gazed at it in fearful anticipation as something dark showed in the hole. It rose very slowly out of the floor—a head, the head of a woman with long, dishevelled dark hair, big, glossy dark eyes, and a corpse-like face, grey and drawn. The face of the long dead.

The four men gazed at it in horror, but more was to follow. Little by little the body of the woman rose to view, holding in her arms a dead baby. Rising completely out of the hole, the woman, carrying her ghastly child, glided noiselessly out of the room. From the distance came the banging of a door—then silence.

The four shaken men rose, took a sip of brandy, and left the house, feeling that they had had enough of ghostly horrors for one night.

They breathed freer in the open air. Outside the house a carriage drive led to an avenue of magnificent old trees. The four men entered the avenue and stopped at the fourth tree. Something made them halt there, a compelling sense, and they all experienced a wave of evil well from the tree. Although it was a calm night with no wind, the branches of

the tree were moving restlessly to and fro, and a vague shadow dangled momentarily from one of the branches.

When it was gone, the spell that had glued the men to the spot in front of the tree released them, and they went on to their respective destinations, satisfied that there was decided truth in the rumour that the house and grounds were haunted. The traditional story of the haunting they ferreted out afterwards.

They learned that in the eighteenth century, Squire Arnold had lived in the house. He engaged a housekeeper, Mary Anne Giles, young and attractive, and had no difficulty in seducing her. She then had a child. Tiring of her, the squire murdered both mother and child and buried the bodies under the floor of the room where the four men had sat.

The disappearance of the woman gradually became known, and a party of people set out to search the house. Arnold learned of their coming and, full of terror and remorse, hanged himself from the fourth tree in the avenue.

#### A NIGHT VIGIL AT CHRISTCHURCH

MANY people will remember the sensation caused in the neighbourhood of Bournemouth by the murder of Mr. Rattenbury, and the subsequent suicide of his clever and beautiful widow in a pool of the River Avon.

It was the hearing of rumours of ghostly happenings, supposedly arising from the widow's death, that led to my holding a vigil on a night in October, 1935, at the scene of her unhappy ending.

The morning of the day I selected for the vigil was very wet, but the weather improved later in the day. I arrived at Christchurch about noon and at once made inquiries concerning the rumours. The evening was well advanced when I eventually set out on my errand, armed with nothing more formidable than a thick stick and a torch. The spot where Mrs. Rattenbury had destroyed herself the previous June was a kind of backwater of the Avon, in a lonely meadow about 300 yards from a lane and close to some railway arches.

One of the stories I had heard was that a woman cycling along the lane one evening a few weeks before had heard a series of cries coming from the direction, so she thought, of the arches. There was something so unearthly and altogether unusual about the cries that she got off her bicycle at once and stood by a wooden gate leading into a meadow skirting the lane and facing the distant river.

By the railway embankment and arches was a shed, and as the woman stood listening she saw a blue light suddenly appear over this shed and then come towards her. As it drew nearer it took the form of a very tall person, wearing a shroud. No face was visible, but there was something so awesome about the figure, especially in the long strides it took, that the woman became terrified and, jumping on her cycle, pedalled frantically away.

Another story was said to have originated with a railway employee, who, when walking along the embankment one night, saw something very bright on the river bank. He climbed down to get a closer look, and to his surprise saw that it was a knife. On his approaching, the knife vanished, and he then noticed a commotion in the water. In one spot the water was whirling round and round, like a miniature whirlpool. Then, suddenly, it grew still, and out of it rose a hand. It was a very white hand with rather long, slender fingers, on one of which flashed and sparkled a ring. For some seconds the fingers clutched the air convulsively, and then the hand sank out of sight. The railwayman, who had all this time stood rooted to the ground with shock, now took to his heels, convinced that it was no human being he had seen in the whirlpool.

These were not altogether nice stories to remember when I was padding the lane alone, but they would keep coming back to me; and I remembered also a third, the story of a cyclist who, when riding along the lane one night, soon after the Rattenbury tragedy, had, on getting near the embankment, seen a woman, young and smartly dressed, walking alongside him. Although he increased his speed, it made no difference; she still kept abreast of him, apparently without increasing her pace, and this continued for some little distance, when suddenly she quite inexplicably vanished. Three nights following he had the same experience, and always in that particular part of the road; but on none of these occasions could he ever see the woman's face with any degree of clearness. It always seemed to be hidden by a mist, though the rest of her, her arms, legs and body, stood out with startling distinctiveness. After the third night he is said never to have seen her again. I thought of this story whenever a cyclist came along.

As the night lengthened and the traffic grew less and less, till it practically ceased, a feeling of intense eeriness came over me. Later, as I came to a halt by a gate, which I imagined was the gate from which the woman had seen the shrouded

figure. I was conscious of a feeling of intense sadness. It came upon me quite suddenly, a terrible sadness that seemed due not to anything hitherto associated with me in any way, but to the surroundings—to something connected with what I saw; the long, lone railway embankment, with three gaping arches, the solitary hut, the great stretch of unkempt grass, flecked with stunted and oddly fashioned trees and the dikes of water, whose surface gleamed in the starlight.

I suddenly felt that something was coming along the lane. I say felt, because I saw and heard nothing, yet I was certain, as certain as I have been about anything in my life, that something had entered into the darkness of the night and was drawing near me. Nearer and nearer it drew, a nameless presence, one that brought with it increasing sadness. It came right up to me. I was conscious of it standing by my side looking at me, trying to read my innermost thoughts. I sensed beauty appertaining to it, beauty and youth, but not happiness or goodness; yet I felt it was not wholly evil. It passed on and left me, and with its departure I was no longer sad.

I left the gate and walked towards Rotten Row, but I had not gone far before I stopped—I felt I had to. I was near an isolated tree growing close to the laneside. A black mist rose out of the ground near a tree—I have never seen anything so unpleasantly black. I had not felt afraid when I had the experience near the gate, but I felt uneasy now.

The mist crept slowly towards me, indescribably sinister. I felt impelled to go back to the gate. When I got there a feeling came over me that I must drown myself. The river had suddenly become a magnet. No longer dark and cold, it seemed now to give out light, a light that was most alluring and seductive; the light drew me on and I had to fight desperately to keep where I was and prevent myself succumbing to its fatal influence, which I instinctively associated with the mist. Then suddenly all desire to drown myself ceased.

Feeling that nothing further would occur, I now came away, to learn later that others had experienced some of the strange things I experienced there, in particular that terrible desire

to drown oneself in the spot where Mrs. Rattenbury ended her life.

Is her spirit at rest? Some think not. I keep asking myself, was that sad presence hers? Did something draw her to the riverside as something tried to draw me, and was it that sinister black mist?

You must form your own conclusions on these strange happenings which are described exactly as they occurred.

## THE HAUNTED STREAM

IN Warwickshire there is a stream, deep in places, which in former days supplied a mill long disused with water.

In the nineties of the last century there was a family named Burton living in a house about half a mile from the stream; Mrs. Burton, an elderly widow, and two girls, Rose and Phoebe. Mrs. Burton, who had married late in life, was attractive at fifty and both the girls were very pretty, Rose being dark and Phoebe fair.

Rose was secretary to a rich man, and Phoebe a manicurist in a beauty salon. They were very fond of dancing and went on Saturday evenings to a dancehall in Birmingham about ten miles from Camly, where they lived. They went by train, as there were no motor vehicles in those days.

It was at the dancehall that they met a young man named Renton, the son of a brewer. He was tall, handsome and wealthy. The girls fell in love with him, and became rivals.

Renton preferred Phoebe, and they were engaged, but a dreadful tragedy prevented them marrying. Phoebe was drowned in the stream. How she got in the stream was a mystery; it was supposed that she fell in when returning from the dancehall—possibly she had drunk a little too freely.

It was two years after the tragedy that my friend Brian Richards went to live in Camly.

Mrs. Burton was dead. Rose had married Renton, sold the house, which her mother left her, and gone to live in France after divorcing her husband. The Waverley, the house where the Burtons had lived, had become a boarding house. Brian stayed there. It was kept by Mrs. Wills, a widow, and there were three servants who slept in the house: Mabel, the cook, and Emma and Lucy, the maids. Lucy Hart came daily, and a youth named Percy to clean shoes and do various outdoor

jobs. It was a very well run house. Everything had to be done as Mrs. Wills wished, in strict order, no idling.

All went smoothly with Brian the first week he was in the house. It was on the following Monday that something strange happened. He was on the landing of the first floor when, thinking that someone was calling him, he leaned over the balustrade and looked down. A girl in a pink dress was in the hall, a very pretty girl with flaxen hair and blue eyes. She was carrying a bunch of flowers, and he noticed a gold ring on one of her fingers. Her cheeks were very pale. Crossing the hall she entered the sitting-room.

Brian, who was strongly attracted by the girl, entered the room immediately after her, but she was not there, the room was empty. Yet there was only the one door and the lofty window was open only at the top.

Much puzzled he asked Mrs. Wills who the girl was. She did not know; there was no such person in her house, she said.

The next day about the same time Brian and Mr. Taylor, a fellow boarder, both saw the girl in pink cross the hall and enter the sitting-room. They told Mrs. Wills and she then confessed that the house was haunted. She begged them not to mention the ghost to the servants, or they would all leave. The two men had little choice but to promise not to say a word to anyone.

That evening Brian was brushing his hair at the dressing-table in his room when he saw reflected in the mirror a girl open the door and peer into the room—a girl with dark hair and eyes, who would have been very good looking but for her pallor and expression, which was clouded with hate. The reflection only lasted a few moments and he then saw only himself again. But the look of hatred in the girl's eyes haunted him, it was so diabolical.

Nothing further happened for some days. Then, one evening after dinner, he had another strange experience. He was walking along a lonely lane leading to the river, a distance of nearly half a mile from the house, when someone went by him.

It was the girl in pink. This time, however, she wore a green dress, and as she walked ahead of him he noticed something

filmy and unreal about her that he had not observed before. She kept ahead of him to the stream. Close to the bank of it was a bush. She had just reached the bush when an invisible someone jumped out of it on to her. There was a cry of surprise and terror, followed by sounds of a desperate struggle between visible and invisible; a splash and the girl in green was in the water. As she sank, a white hand wearing a gold ring appeared above the surface of the stream clutching the air.

Throughout the swiftly enacted incident Brian felt as if he was witnessing something in a dream, yet his senses told him that it had actually happened—that he had been present at a battle of hate which had ended in murder.

What happened to Rose Burton, in France, was never known in Camly. The stream by the bush is still haunted.

## THE CASTLE TERRORS

IRELAND is traditionally and primarily the land of the O's and Mc's, and most of the reputed haunted castles have belonged to one or other of those clans.

The picturesque ruins of Dunluce Castle, on a cliff in Ireland, are said to be haunted by the spirit of the original owner, who for his crimes was doomed to remain earthbound. Dunseverick Castle in Antrim is similarly haunted.

The old O'Neills of Tyrone, one of whose descendants is the Count O'Neill of Portugal, have, like my line of the O'Donnells, a banshee, which used to appear at Shane Castle. She was very lovely, and confined her advents to one room. Should she be seen merely pacing silently to and fro, her appearance boded no ill, but if she was seen wringing her hands or heard singing, her presence was a portent of some grievous catastrophe to a member of the clan. One of the O'Neills heard her voice prior to setting out on a long journey. A few days later he was killed.

The ancient Shane Castle was destroyed by fire in or about 1816.

An O'Flaherty of Galway was marching out of his castle one night on a foraging expedition, when he heard his traditional banshee singing sadly on one of the castle turrets. The following night his wife heard the banshee, and a few days later her husband's followers brought back his body; he had been killed by a member of a clan with which he had a feud.

On another occasion more than one banshee was heard singing at the castle of the O'Flahertys prior to the death of the wife of the clan chief.

The ruins of Ross Castle, Killarney, are rumoured to be haunted by the ghost of the O'Donohoe. Every few years in the dead of night he emerges from Ross Castle on his famous white horse, accompanied by his male and female followers,

and rides three times round the lake of Killarney. That done, he returns with his retinue to the castle, and is seen no more for another decade.

Moving to Wales, in Brecknockshire are the ruins of Builth Castle. According to a traditional story, Llywelyn II of Gruffydd, the last actual Prince of Wales, came to Builth as a last resource, supposing it to be held by his friends. He rode there in the snow, having taken the precaution to have his horse shod backwards, so as to mislead any of his enemies who might be on his track. But he was refused admittance to the castle, and the blacksmith who shod his horse gave information to the English.

As Llywelyn returned, dejected and sore at heart, he was set upon and killed by Adam Francton, who was ignorant of his rank. Learning whom he had slain, Francton obtained permission to cut off the prince's head, and it was sent to Edward I at Rhuddlan, to be afterwards carried through the streets of London, while the body was buried at crossroads near the spot, which still bears the name of Cefynn-y-Bedd Llywelyn—'The ridge of Llywelyn's grave'.

The ruins of Builth Castle and the crossroads are both rumoured to be haunted, from time to time, by some of the spectres and unearthly sounds peculiar to Wales.

No counties in England or Wales are more haunted than Glamorganshire and Pembrokeshire. St. Donat's Castle in Pembrokeshire is reputed to have been haunted for many years by a phantom in white, believed to be the ghost of a Lady Stradling. And Gideon Shaddoe wrote in the last century about a castle in Glamorganshire that numbered among its several ghosts the phantom of a mail-clad hand and arm, which he saw one day thrust out of a window far beyond the ivy-clad wall of the ancient building. The bell of a church near the castle had been heard to toll 'of itself' on Hallowe'en.

Many wrecks have taken place off the rocky coast of Glamorganshire; after one of them, in which an evil local landowner was drowned, a black coach with four spectral horses was seen to drive from the seashore to his mansion. The

coach was believed to contain the spirit of the drowned man, who for his many crimes was doomed to haunt the mansion and neighbouring countryside till the Day of Judgment.

A weird story is told of Linlithgow Palace in Scotland. One night in 1539 King James V cried out for torches, and on his attendants rushing into his chamber, he told them he had seen the ghost of the Laird of Balvearie. 'He came to me,' James said, 'and addressed me thus: "Oh, woe to the day that ever I knew thee or thy service; for serving of thee against God, against his servants, and against justice I am adjudged to endless torture."

The laird died that night in his home, and the people who were with him affirmed that he had said those very words as the king had heard them in Linlithgow.

Dumbarton Castle has a much later ghost. During the seventies of the last century the two daughters of a captain, who was for years in command of the staff division stationed at the fort, were standing one moonlight night at the window commanding a view of the terrace, above which the sentry on duty had to walk. Suddenly one of the girls exclaimed: 'See, the sentry out there is pacing to and fro but he has no head!' The other sister looked out and saw a tall, headless man in an old-world uniform.

The next day, on the girls mentioning to friends what they had seen, they were told that the headless sentry at Dumbarton Castle had been a known fact in the county for hundreds of years.

The Castle of Duntulm was at one time reputed to be haunted by the ghost of Donald Gorm, who used to terrify the inmates by slamming doors, tramping up and down staircases, and making unearthly groans and cries. The disturbances did not cease until a young man sat up alone in the castle one night and, when the ghost of Donald Gorm appeared, arrayed in the tartan of his clan, the Macdonalds, spoke to it and learned the reason for it haunting the castle.

Dunstaffnage Castle, long in ruins, is said to have been haunted by a glaistig that, before the death of a member of

the clan owning the place, used to wail in the building and tread along the passages and rooms, pulling the clothes from the beds of some of the sleepers, with dismal moans and cries.

Unlike the banshees of Ireland, the glaistigs of Scotland not only attach themselves to certain families but also to caves and streams and beaches. They vary in appearance, as do the Irish banshees. Some of them are old and withered, others very lovely, with long, golden hair and blue eyes. Sleat Castle, Breacacha Castle, the ruins of Mearnaig Castle and several other castles are all reputed to have been haunted at times by glaistigs.

A weird true story is told of a castle in the Hebrides. It is situated on a cliff and close to a mansion. Both buildings belong to a branch of the M—s. The castle is in ruins. One Christmas in the seventies of the last century the M—s gave a ball, and among the dancers were a Miss Ross and young M., the second son of the laird, who was in the Royal Navy.

When the dawn had broken Miss Ross and young M., who had been dancing together, walked to the castle ruins. Miss Ross was suddenly startled on seeing a girl, whom she took at first to be one of the other guests, gazing at her through what appeared to be an inaccessible window.

'Do look at that silly Maud Grey,' she said, 'she will be killed if she does not take care,' and she ran towards her, pulling her companion with her.

When she got close to the girl she saw she was not Maud Grey, but a young girl dressed entirely in white, with long fair hair falling over her shoulders, and having on her right arm a broad silver bracelet of curious design. The girl regarded Miss Ross fixedly for a moment, and then disappeared.

'Good heavens!' Miss Ross cried. 'She has fallen over the rocks.'

She ran to the window and looked out, but no traces of the girl were visible: indeed, no human being could have scaled the steep, precipitous crags on that side of the ruins. Miss Ross looked at her companion; he was very pale and silent.

On their way back to the house they met Maud Grey. She had never been near the ruins.

'Who could the girl have been?' Miss Ross asked young M.

'Don't mention her to any of the family,' M. replied. 'I will tell you who I think she was, but first let me ask if you noticed the bracelet on the girl's arm.'

'I did,' Miss Ross exclaimed, and described it to him.

M. became even paler and said: 'You have seen our evil family ghost. Her history is this: one of my ancestors and the heir of the M's fell deeply in love with a beautiful peasant girl. They became engaged and were about to be married, when the girl suddenly disappeared and was never heard of again. It was supposed she had been murdered by one of his relations, who was furious at the thought of him marrying a girl of such humble birth. For very many years there were preserved in our family two silver bracelets, such as you describe, with which our chiefs betrothed their brides. One of them had shortly before disappeared, and it was believed that the infatuated youth had given it to the poor girl whom he intended to marry.'

'Ever since, we M—s have always been warned of an approaching death by a fair-haired girl with this bracelet on her arm.'

Young M. died soon after Miss Ross had seen the ghost.

PROBABLY no case of haunting in England has ever attracted more attention than that which was alleged to take place at No. — Berkeley Square. Berkeley Square lies in the very heart of Mayfair, and consequently, when it was rumoured that a house in such a fashionable and highly aristocratic surroundings had a ghost and a very terrible one too, all society at once became interested.

Lord Lyttelton wrote in 'Notes and Queries' for November 16, 1872: 'It is quite true that there is a house in Berkeley Square (No. —) said to be haunted, and long unoccupied on that account. There are strange stories about it, into which this deponent cannot enter.'

And seven years later 'Mayfair' magazine stated: 'The house in Berkeley Square contains at least one room of which the atmosphere is supernaturally fatal to body and mind.'

For years the house continued to stand empty because of the dreadful, uncanny things said to occur there. Few people dared to pass it alone late at night.

Among the stories told me about the haunting is the following:

One bitterly cold night in December two sailors, named Stephens and Carey, who had come from Southampton to London on a week's furlough, having squandered all their money found themselves penniless with nothing to eat and nowhere to sleep.

After rambling forlornly along street after street, seeking in vain an archway or alcove where they could rest and find shelter from the icy wind, they came at length to Berkeley Square, silent and deserted.

They were leaning against the railings of the Square garden when Stephens suddenly said: 'Do you see that house over

### THE SCREAMING SKULLS

yonder, matey? It's to let. Why shouldn't we get in and do a night on the boards?

Carey at once agreed. He was desperately tired, and the prospect of being able to lie down in the quiet somewhere, even if it was only in a coalhole, appealed to him.

Biding their opportunity, when no one was about the two seamen cautiously approached the house and slipped back the latch of one of the windows, which to their joy and surprise was not barred, and climbed into the house. Groping their way along a dank, dark passage they bumped against banisters and after a brief pause decided to venture aloft.

On reaching the second floor they decided to spend the night in one of the back rooms. It was a trifle more dismal and seemed in rather a worse condition than the other rooms they had seen, but on the outside wall near the window there was a pipe which could easily be got at should they be disturbed.

Feeling that a fire would be comforting they stole downstairs, careful lest their footsteps might be heard next door. Not finding any stray wood anywhere they broke up two or three fixed drawers in the kitchen dresser and, returning to the room they had chosen for the night, they soon had a fire. The heat from it gradually made them drowsy and presently they fell asleep.

They were abruptly roused by sounds in the lower part of the house. As they sat up and listened, the sounds likened to footsteps and began to ascend the stairs.

The footsteps might have been made with bare, fat feet, there was a curious shuffling stealthiness about them. They crossed the first floor landing and began to climb the stairs to the second floor.

A great terror gripped the sailors. The steps at length came on to the landing, approached the room and halted at the door, the handle of which began slowly to turn. After a period of agonizing suspense the two men saw the door slowly open and something of indescribable horror, neither human nor animal, appear on the threshold. As it moved stealthily towards the men the spell that had held them broke.

### THE HOUSE IN BERKELEY SQUARE

Stephens made a dash to the window, but so great was his terror that in grabbing at the water-pipe to climb down it he missed and crashed to the ground. The injuries he received were so severe that he died, but not before he was able to explain what had happened. Carey was found by a policeman early in the morning, roaming round and round the Square quite insane.

There is another story of the haunting of No. — Berkeley Square.

A family whom I will call Jarvice, on coming to London one autumn took up residence in the house. After they had been in it for some weeks one of the maids, happening to go into the room in which the two sailors had suffered their harrowing experience, was shortly afterwards heard screaming for help. Fearing she was ill, Mrs. Jarvice ran to the room and found the girl lying on the floor in a fit.

The maid never properly recovered, but from her rambling statements it was inferred that her lamentable condition was solely due to something very dreadful that she had seen in the room. After this the room was kept locked, and no one ever ventured within its precincts, till a friend of the Jarvices, a Captain Raymond, who was engaged to one of the daughters, hearing what had happened, begged to be allowed to sleep there. He was so persistent that Mr. and Mrs. Jarvice finally gave in to him, on condition, however, that some arrangement was made by which he could summon aid if needed.

To this Raymond agreed, and it was decided that, in order to let the family know that all was going well with him, he should ring the bell by his bedside once every hour between midnight and dawn; if, on the contrary, something amiss should happen, and he should suddenly need help, he gave his most solemn assurance he would ring the bell twice.

The chosen night arrived, and as the captain retired to the room, the rest of the family, unknown to him, assembled together in the hall, no one daring to go to bed.

Very slowly the minutes passed away until midnight drew near. Then from afar off came the slow and measured chimes

of the church clock. Simultaneous with the third stroke a bell gave a single, solitary tinkle, and everyone expressed themselves immeasurably relieved.

Again there came a wait, and the minutes crept tediously by with the family's nerves full stretched. Reassurance came from one of the Jarvice boys, who disclosed that the captain had in his possession a big service six-shooter; he had asked that no one be told about this in case they should be scared and fancy he might shoot someone with it.

Then suddenly all heard the bell. This time a clang, as if it had been pulled violently, then a slight pause, a very faint tinkle, and the loud crack of a revolver, after which silence.

Amid frenzied cries from the women a wild rush was made for the stairs, Mr. Jarvice leading the way, candle in one hand and poker in the other, to be joined en route by the servants, who came running down from their quarters on the top landing, with white and terrified faces.

On bursting into the room the family found Captain Raymond shot dead by his own revolver.

What terrible thing had forced his hand?

### WILL-O'-THE-WISP AND CORPSE CANDLES

ONE of the most familiar of 'ghosts' to us all, perhaps, is Will-o'-the-wisp or Jack-a-Lantern.

Descriptions of this phenomenon vary. It is usually described as resembling the light of a lantern, varying in colour; sometimes leadenish blue, greenish or reddish, sometimes of no distinct colour at all. It is said sometimes to hover about, keeping close to the ground, while at other times it flits and bounces about in the air, occasionally following people at a distance.

According to one theory, Will-o'-the-wisp's 'haunting' is confined to marshy places, but this cannot be true. I have spent nights on marshy ground on Exmoor and Dartmoor and have never seen it; nor have I met any people in those localities who have seen it, so that the idea of it being just a marsh gas is erroneous.

Will-o'-the-wisp has also been said to be similar to the Welsh Canhywllau Cyrch—Corpse Candles—but this is incorrect. The corpse candles are invariably a portent of death, whereas Will-o'-the-wisp is of no specific significance.

Will-o'-the-wisp has also been likened to Ph<sub>3</sub>, phosphorescent hydrogen, a gas exuding from decaying vegetable and carnal matter, said to be seen at times in cemeteries, to which it is apparently chiefly confined. This gas is seemingly sometimes the colour of Will-o'-the-wisp, but that is about the only peculiarity that the two have in common.

All gases have some heat and a characteristic smell but, according to accounts of Will-o'-the-wisp, it is entirely without heat or odour. In short, it is a baffling mystery, a phenomenon that has up to the present time never been satisfactorily explained.

Turning to the traditional corpse candles of Wales, when in various parts of Wales I have questioned people about these

phenomena but have never met anyone who has seen them, though some have known people who have testified to seeing them. Belief in the candles is still strong in certain localities. The following account of them by the Rev. Mr. Davis is taken from 'News from the Invisible World' by T. Charley, published during the last century.

'We call them (the Canhywllau) candles because that light doth resemble a material candle-light; saving that when one comes near them they vanish; but presently appear again. If it be a little candle, pale or bluish, then follows the corpse either of an abortive, or some infant; if a big one, then the corpse either of someone come of age; if there be seen two or three or more, some big, some small, together, then so many such corpses together. If two candles come from divers places, and be seen to meet, the corpses will do the like; if any of these candles be seen to turn, sometimes a little out of that leads to the church, the following corpse will be found to turn in that very place.

'When I was about fifteen years of age, living at Llanyllyn, late at night, some neighbours saw one of these corpse candles hovering up and down along the bank of the river until they were weary in beholding; at last they left it so, and went to bed. A few weeks after a damsel from Montgomeryshire came to see her friends who lived on the other side of the Istwyth, and thought to ford it at the place where the light was seen; but being dissuaded by some lookers on (by reason of a flood) she walked up and down along the bank, where the aforesaid candle did, waiting for the falling of the waters, which at last she took and was drowned.'

In a wild and retired district in North Wales the following occurrence took place, to the great astonishment of the mountaineers (reported in 'Frazer's Magazine').

'We can vouch for the truth of the statement as many members of our own Teutu, or clan, were witnesses of the fact. On a dark evening, a few years ago, some persons with whom we are well acquainted were returning to Barmouth on the south or opposite side of the river. As they approached the ferry-

house at Penthrynn, which is directly opposite Barmouth, they observed a light near the house, which they conjectured to be produced by a bonfire, and greatly puzzled they were the reason why it should have been lighted. As they came nearer, however, it vanished and when they inquired at the house respecting it, they were surprised to learn that not only the people there displayed no light, but they had not even seen one; nor could they perceive any sign of it on the sands.

'On reaching Barmouth the circumstance was mentioned, and the fact corroborated by some of the people there, who had also plainly and distinctly seen the lights.

'It was settled therefore by some of the old fishermen that this was a "death-token"; and sure enough, the man who kept the ferry at that time was drowned at high water a few nights afterwards on the very spot where the light was seen. He was landing from the boat when he fell into the water, and so perished.

'The same winter the Barmouth people, as well as the inhabitants of the opposite banks, were struck by the appearance of a number of small lights, which were seen dancing in the air at a place called Borthwyn, about a mile from the town. A great number of people came out to see these lights and after a while they all but one disappeared, and this one proceeded slowly towards the water's edge, to a little bay where some boats were moored. The men in a sloop, which was anchored near the spot, saw the light advancing—they also saw it hover for a few seconds over one particular boat and then totally disappear. Two or three days afterwards, the man to whom that particular boat belonged was drowned in the river, while he was sailing about Barmouth harbour in that very boat. We have narrated these facts just as they occurred.'

I have several other accounts of these phenomena, all of them asserted to be authentic. Those who have seen them are convinced they are prophetically supernatural, omens of coming ill, only experienced by people of genuine old Welsh extraction.

Then there is the phenomenon of the churchyard ghost.

Herbert Mayo, M.D., in his book 'Popular Superstitions' published more than a hundred years ago quotes several cases of phenomenal lights appearing in churchyards and other places where people have been buried.

Here is one of the instances taken from 'Archives', a reliable German book by P. Kieffer. The story was sent to Kieffer by Herr Ehrman, who was told it by Herr Pfeffel, his father-in-law.

A youth named Billing, who was a candidate for Orders, had experienced sensorial illusions and was particularly sensitive to the presence of human remains, which made him tremble and shudder in all his limbs. Pfeffel, who was partly or wholly blind, was in the habit of holding the arm of Billing when taking a daily walk in his garden near Colmar.

At one spot in the garden Pfeffel felt Billing give a sudden start, as if he had received an electric shock. He asked Billing if anything was the matter. 'No, nothing,' Billing replied. But on their going over the same spot again the same thing happened. Billing, now being pressed to explain the cause of it, said that it arose from a peculiar sensation which he always experienced when in the vicinity of human remains; that it was his impression a human body must be interred there, but that if Pfeffel would return with him at night he would be able to speak with greater confidence.

Accordingly, they went together to the garden when it was dark, and as they approached the spot Billing said he could see a faint light over it. At ten paces from it he stopped and would go no further, saying that he saw hovering over it, as if self-supported in the air, its feet only a few inches from the ground, a luminous female figure nearly five feet high, with the right arm folded on her breast, the left hanging by her side. When Pfeffel stepped forward and placed himself about where the figure appeared to be, Billing declared it was now on his right hand, now on his left, now behind, now before him. When Pfeffel cut the air with his stick, it seemed as if it went through and divided a light flame, which then united again. The experiment was repeated the next night, in company with some

of Pfeffel's relatives, and gave the same result. Only Billing was conscious of the apparition, the others did not see anything.

Pfeffel then, unknown to Billing, had the ground dug up, when was found at some depth, beneath a layer of quick-lime, a human body in progress of decomposition. The remains were removed and the earth carefully replaced. Three days afterwards Billing, from whom this whole proceeding had been concealed, was again led to the spot by Pfeffel. He walked over it without experiencing any unusual impression whatever.

Mayo, who was partly if not entirely a materialist, was seemingly in accordance with Prof. Von Reichenbach, a German scientist, who believed in what Mayo termed the Od force; that is, a gas which is said to make itself visible as a dim light or warning flame to highly sensitive subjects. Such persons, according to Mayo and Reichenbach, see flames issuing from the poles of magnets and crystal, one of the causes which excites the evolution of the gas being chemical decomposition: in other words, decaying bodies of human beings.

Von Reichenbach experimented with a Miss Reichel in a cemetery near Vienna. Wherever Miss Reichel looked she saw masses of flame, which manifested mostly about recent graves. She described the appearance of the lights as resembling less bright flames than fiery vapour, something between fog and flames, the lights rising to four feet above the ground. Miss Reichel did not apparently feel any heat exuding from the flames when she put her hand in them.

Von Reichenbach, who had learned about Pfeffel's experiments with Billing, concluded that the luminant phenomena Billing declared he had seen in Pfeffel's garden were due to the same cause as those Miss Reichel said she saw in the cemetery near Vienna. Pfeffel and Von Reichenbach apparently believed that all ghosts said to be seen in churchyards were due to this natural gas.

But were they? Are they? If due to a natural gas, how is it more people have not seen them? It is more credible to believe that these alleged luminary phenomena in cemeteries may be

due to the supernatural. I have seen no satisfactory explanation yet stated as to why these ghostly lights should be apparently restricted to places where dead humans are buried. Why not dead animals? What hosts of these mysterious lights would appear if they too were included!

Another luminant phenomenon is St. Elmo's Fire, a light said to be seen at sea, especially in southern climates, often during thunderstorms. Of a light resembling a kind of star, it has appeared at the top of masts of ships, spires, other pointed objects, on the tops of trees, on the manes of horses, even occasionally on human heads.

Scientists, who of course believe all luminant phenomena are due to a natural cause, believe that St. Elmo's Fire finds an explanation in a rapid production of electricity. If this is so, surely expert electricians could produce a St. Elmo's Fire on any of the aforesaid objects. But have they ever done so?

I do not doubt that such lights have been seen, there is ample evidence to prove that; but the theory that electricity is the sole explanation of the phenomena does not seem to me to be wholly satisfactory.

Like in the other true tales and legends we have seen, science has so much to explain before we can even begin to enter the province of the unknown.

**also read**

**GHOSTS**

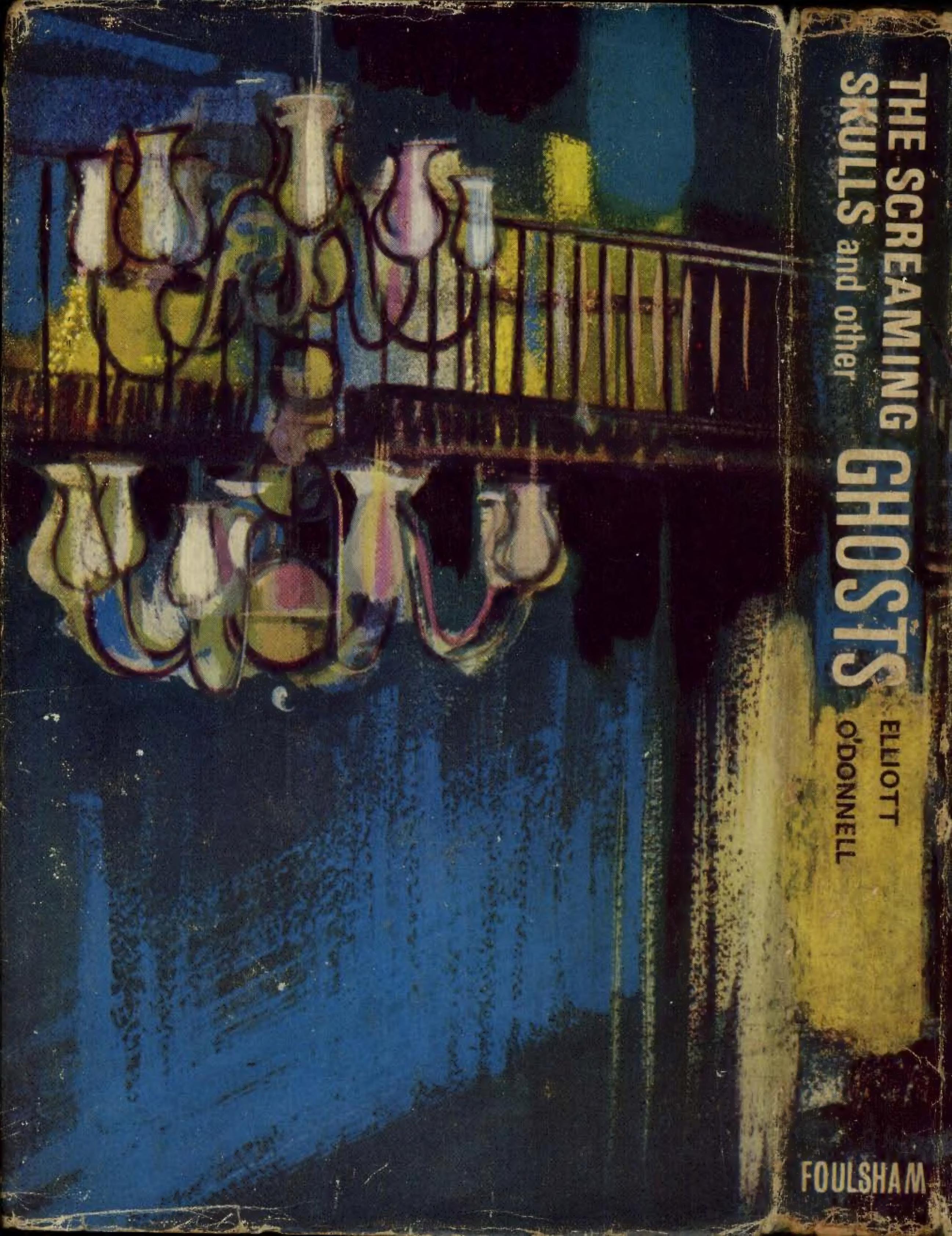
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